

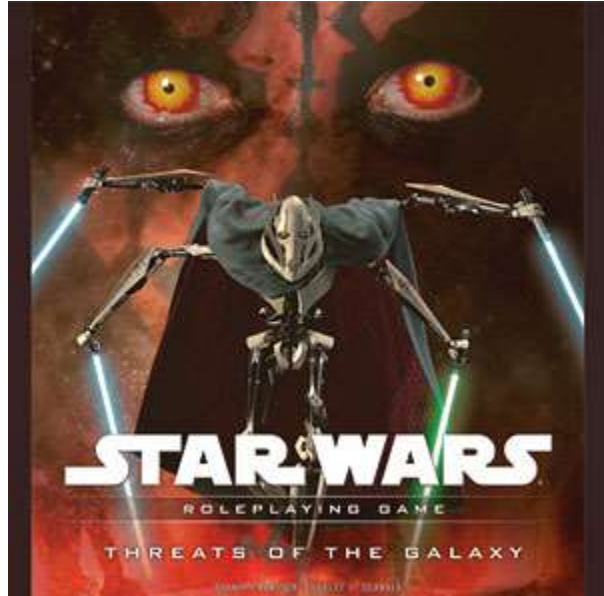
Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 1

Portrayal

Matthew Grau

The Sith. The very name has haunted the Jedi Order for millennia. This cult of Force practitioners has known both absolute power and unconscionable self-destruction. Indeed, they are something of an enigma -- nightmares to all, but to themselves, a natural expression of the Force.

It is no surprise that many players are drawn to the idea of exploring the dark side and creating Sith characters. Although [Threats of the Galaxy](#) examines the Sith as enemies, this series of articles will explore the different aspects involved in developing, portraying, and using compelling and unique Sith characters in five eras of the *Star Wars* saga.



The Sith Code

*Peace is a lie, there is only passion.
Through passion, I gain strength.
Through strength, I gain power.
Through power, I gain victory.
Through victory, my chains are broken.
The Force shall free me.*

The Sith are creatures of passion and lust. The dark side has its allure because it calls to the things we crave most in life, seducing those whose desires outstrip their sanity.

Selflessness is not a concept inherent in the Sith way of being. Those who choose to serve the dark side out of devotion to a philosophical or religious ideal are rare. The exploration of passion inevitably leads to desire, and delving deeply into desire inevitably leads to greed. Power corrupts, and the Sith are no exception. Though one may begin on the path intending balance or even commanding the dark side for altruistic purposes, all fall prey to greed and vanity. This is why groups of Sith, left to their own devices, eventually turn on each other. They are predators, and sooner or later, Sith regard their bretheren as threats.

You might say the key difference between the Jedi and the Sith is that the Jedi contemplate and master inner space to serve others, whereas the Sith dominate and master outer space to serve themselves.

Eras of the Sith

The Sith figure into five important eras of the *Star Wars* saga. The area you choose in which to play greatly determines the kind of Sith you'll be designing and how they fit in with the galaxy. It's important that you choose an era that works with the kind of Sith game you'd like to play.

The Knights of the Old Republic Era

Four thousand years before the Galactic Empire, Darth Revan brought the Sith into the light after visiting Sith worlds and basking in the power of the dark side. Revan and his apprentice, Darth Malak, brought about the bloody Jedi Civil War. They established the new Sith Empire and nearly wiped out the Jedi.

Since the Sith are prevalent and operate openly in this era, it is easy to play games involving Sith characters.

The Rise of the Empire Era

The Rule of Two characterized this era, as Darth Sidious completed his apprenticeship under the tutelage of Darth Plagueis the Wise, and killed his master while he slept. Sidious first took Darth Maul as his apprentice, and after the vicious Zabrak was slain by Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Tyranus slipped under his wing. Tyranus was, in turn, killed by Anakin Skywalker, who took Tyranus' place and became one of the most dreaded Lords of the Sith, Darth Vader.

During this era, Darth Sidious' schemes required obfuscation and no lesser amount of treachery. His plans hinged on the Jedi's belief that the Sith were extinct. Although Sidious may have sheltered and dispatched Dark Jedi to satisfy his plans, he would not train them in the ways of the Sith.



Under canon, it is difficult to justify characters during this era who are true Sith. Dark Jedi characters, on the other hand, fit easily into the growing Sith menace. However, you could create a splinter sect of the Sith that has remained hidden in other parts of the galaxy, like that of Darth Millennial and his Dark Force religion.

The Rebellion Era

After Darth Sidious created the Galactic Empire, dissolved the Senate, and usurped control of the galaxy, he eased the Rule of Two a bit. He created the Secret Order of the Empire and brought dark side Force practitioners into the fold to be his prophets. He and Vader trained many dark side Adepts, using Dark Jedi as their most trusted and dangerous of servants, including the Emperor's Hand. However, the Rule of Two is kept intact in its strictest sense as neither Sidious or Vader passed on the true legacy and ways of the Sith.

As in the Rise of the Empire era, true Sith are rare. Dark Jedi, however, are even more prevalent and can operate openly in the service of the Emperor. Again, other Sith with different views might exist in the shadows of the galaxy, but they would have to remain concealed. Most likely, Darth Sidious would view them as a threat to be extinguished (an interesting plot device in its own right). However, Darth Vader did have at least one secret apprentice . . .

The New Jedi Order Era

Although the Rule of Two prevented Vader from taking on a true apprentice, he did pass his teachings to pupils, notably the Dark Lady of the Sith, Lumiya. She trained several apprentices during this era, but they are not truly Sith because Lumiya herself does not become full-fledged Sith until her training by Vergere in the Legacy era.

In The New Jedi Order era, the Sith are all but extinct. It is only through the training of Vergere that Lumiya becomes a true Dark Lady of the Sith. Dark Jedi characters would be more appropriate.

The Legacy Era

During the Confederation-Galactic Alliance War, the Dark Lady Lumiya resurrected the Rule of Two and found herself the perfect apprentice -- the grandson of Darth Vader. Jacen Solo followed in his ancestor's footsteps and became Darth Caedus.

While Caedus was busy trying to gather power, he drew all the attention of the Jedi to him. Meanwhile, hidden on the ancient Sith planet Korriban, Darth Krayt gathered other Dark Jedi to his cause and once again founded an Order of the Sith. This time, however, it was based on Krayt's Rule of One -- there would be only one Order,

under which there would be many Sith. Eventually, the Sith returned in numbers and brought the galaxy to its knees.

During the time of Darth Caedus, Sith are even more rare than they were in the Rebellion era. Again, Dark Jedi would be more appropriate as characters. However, after Darth Krayt emerges with his new Sith Order, the Sith once again become plentiful in the galaxy, more so than in any other era but those of the ancient past.

Crafting the Sith

To create a compelling Sith character, you must consider several important factors, including his reason for falling to the dark side, his personal interpretation of Sith beliefs, and his torturous apprenticeship.

Falling to the Dark Side

Though each Sith is unique, they share things in common. The most obvious is the presence of a person or event that pulled them to the dark side. Many fall in pursuit of power; their desire for personal gain draws them to a philosophy of absolutes. Many others fall prey through their inability to resolve deep hurt, anger, fear, or hatred. These emotions consume their sanity and draw them into a spiral of suffering, transforming them into a potential Sith.

But these are not the only reasons. Some begin with a desire to discover balance in the Force, believing that a true understanding of existence is possible only by examining the light and dark facets of all beings. Others begin with an altruistic desire to help others by rapidly increasing their power or gaining access to mythical abilities that only the dark side can offer. Some are drawn through a misguided hunger for curiosity, a deep desire simply to know. Most often, it is a combination of these factors, but they all lead down the same path.

This crucial event is the foundation in Sith character design. It helps determine who he is on a core level, as well as what might redeem him (if the opportunity arises).

It might be helpful to sketch out a basic story of how your character first encountered the power of the dark side. What made him curious enough to play with fire and ultimately become baptized by it, reborn as a creature of darkness?

While the most obvious class progression is from the Jedi heroic class to the Sith Apprentice prestige class (and eventually to the Sith Lord prestige class), there are many other ways of arriving that might better fit your character's background. For example, Darth Sidious was never officially trained as a Jedi, instead spreading his web of intrigue as a noble. The greatest restriction to entering the Sith Apprentice prestige class is learning Use the Force as a trained skill, but there are several methods to obtaining said skill.

As long as you have Force Sensitivity, you can train in Use the Force by any of the traditional skill training methods, including the Skill Training feat, increasing your Intelligence to the point where you get a new trained skill, or taking Force Sensitivity at 1st level and spending one of your starting trained skills on Use the Force.

Another method is, of course, taking levels in the Jedi heroic class, the only class that has Force Sensitivity as a starting feat, which can also be taken as a bonus feat when multiclassing into Jedi. Remember that levels in the Jedi class do not necessarily mean training in the Jedi Order. Instead, they could indicate training from a Force-using tradition or simply the first steps of training by a Sith master.

A character must have seven levels (in any combination of classes) to be eligible for the Sith Apprentice prestige



class.

Beliefs

The philosophy of the Sith is unique. It is a cult dedicated to the most dangerous of emotions, yet it rises to galaxy-shaking power again and again. One of the primary reasons for this is the Sith's absolute devotion to the law of the jungle -- only the strong survive, and it is the right of the strong to prey on the weak. Through perpetual conflict, the strong are pushed down the path of perfection. This is the reason the Sith have pressed the galaxy into war and oppression time and again, some for reasons of personal strength and gain, and others through a philosophy of forcing change and evolution. Morality and peace are only obstructions to this ultimate goal.

The Sith also believe that the path to power is to attain a more holistic view of the Force by embracing their passions. Whereas the Jedi seek to overcome "negative" emotions such as pain, anger, and hate, the Sith welcome them as natural -- and as fuel in their quest for power.

These are the fundamental beliefs of the Sith, but each one internalizes and acts on them differently. Take a moment to determine which of these beliefs are most important to your character and how he works to enforce them on others and on the galaxy as a whole.

Apprenticeship

When developing a Sith character, consider his schooling in the dark side. How did he slip under the wing of his master? What was his apprenticeship like? Every Sith apprentice stirs in the shadows of his master for many years as he is instructed in the dark side. The nature of this apprenticeship varies, but it relies on cruelty and manipulation. The lessons are designed to nurture the consuming passions of the apprentice while cultivating things that lead to aggression, such as pain, malice, and revenge.

In addition, Sith training works to eradicate fear and compassion -- two emotions that cripple the strong. That which a Sith Lord fears or finds compassion for has power over him, something which he must not abide. Thus, he is forced to confront and conquer his fears, usually in traumatic ways, and the things he loves are stolen from him, one by one, until he is no longer tethered to anything but his devotion to the Sith.

Apprenticeship is extreme, requiring tireless years of training. During the period when the Rule of Two prevailed, one Sith apprentice must be more than a match for several Jedi since the Sith do not have the luxury of numbers. Like most great predators, a single Sith Lord, even an apprentice, is something to be feared.

Most apprenticeships conclude the day the student is willing and able to commit the ultimate act of "selflessness" and devotion to the Sith -- killing or destroying someone that he loves. This action demonstrates his embodiment of unattached strength, power, and mercilessness. For example, Darth Vader sacrificed Mace Windu and, ultimately, the Jedi Order. Darth Caedus murdered his aunt, Mara Jade Skywalker. Once this act is complete, the apprentice may take on the title of Sith Lord and his new name.

Nothing is more formative in a Sith's life than his apprenticeship. When he becomes a Sith Lord, it is the Sith Lord that his master crafted him to be.

If you haven't already done so, consider who your character's master was and how he trained your character. What were his harshest lessons? What did your character have to do to conquer his fears? Who was the beloved person in your character's life that he murdered to finally



join the ranks of the Sith?

In addition, apprenticeship is the time when a Sith begins to hone and direct his abilities. What are your character's first talents? Do they come from the Armor Specialist talent tree, reflecting a Sith who appreciates a striking suit of armor (such as Darth Revan or Darth Krayt)? Do they come from the Duelist or Lightsaber Combat trees, reflecting a Sith who appreciates the elegance of his lightsaber (such as Darth Tyranus or Darth Vader)? Do they come from the Alter, Control, or Sense trees, reflecting a Sith who deeply connects with the power of the Force (again, such as Darth Tyranus or Darth Vader)? Do they come from the Dark Side or Sith trees, reflecting an apprentice who strongly embraces the power of the dark side (such as Darth Sidious)?

Next Time

In Part 2 of "Behind the Threat: The Sith," we'll explore what it means to become a Sith Lord, as well as building your character's appearance.

Feel free to post your thoughts or questions about this article in [this message board thread](#).

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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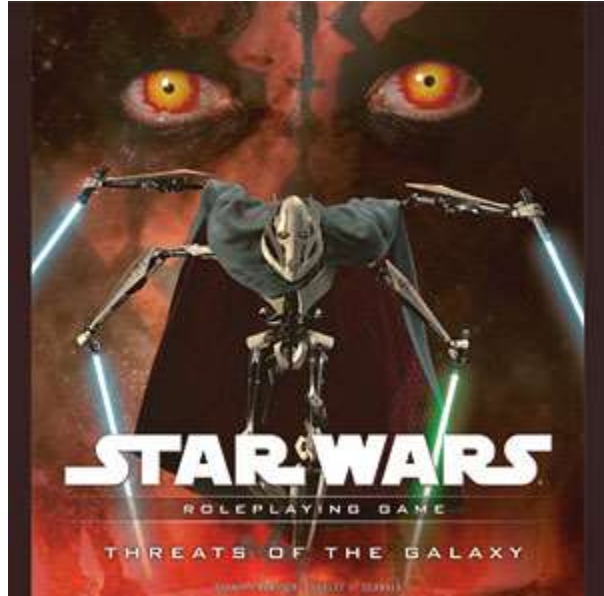
Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 2

The Becoming

Matthew Grau

Check out the Behind the Threat archives!
[Behind the Threat: The Sith 1: Portrayal](#)

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 Tyrannus (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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Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 3

Design

Matthew Grau

Check out the Behind the Threat archives!

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 1: Portrayal](#)
[Behind the Threat: The Sith 2: The Becoming](#)

The last two installments of "Behind the Threat: The Sith" talked mostly about the fact and flavor of the Sith. This article digs into the game mechanics of designing appropriately savage dark side characters.

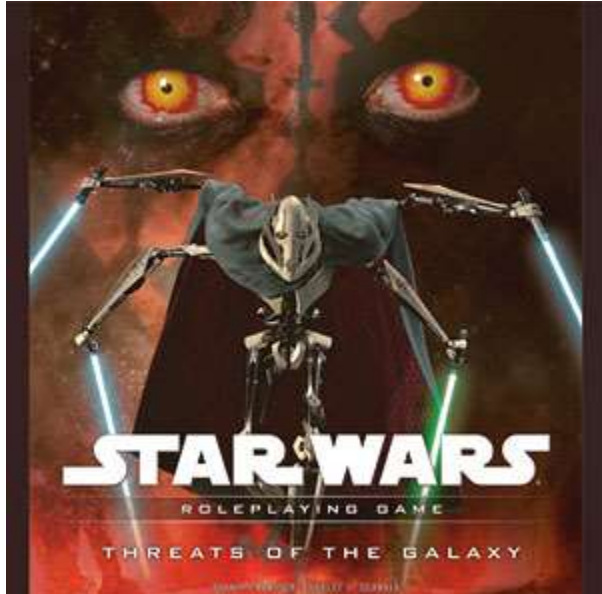
Not all Sith are fallen Jedi. There are as many paths to darkness as there are paths in life. One of the most infamous and powerful Sith was Darth Sidious, a man named Palpatine who was a noble and a politician (growing out of the Noble heroic class). Some were warriors or survivors of one sort or another, whose prowess and/or Force-sensitivity drew the attention of a Sith lord (growing out of the Soldier or Scout heroic classes). Those who live in the shadows of society may already be inclined to the obsessions of the Sith simply due to the nature of their lifestyle, especially if they are Force-sensitive (growing out of the Scoundrel heroic class).

Others are Jedi who fell or those whose control of the Force was developed outside the Jedi tradition. Darth Vader, the scourge of the Jedi, was in fact a powerful and respected one himself until the lure of the dark side claimed him. Perhaps the easiest explanation for a Force-using character to have strayed down the path of the Sith is that he lived in a world where falling to the dark side was a regular concern.

Meeting the Requirements

The first threshold on the path of the Sith is to gain access to the Sith apprentice prestige class. To do so, your character must be at least 7th level, have Use the Force as a trained skill, and have the Force Sensitivity and Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber) feats. He must also have acquired a Dark Side Score equal to his Wisdom and be a member of the Sith tradition, but these are both accomplished through roleplaying. The Force Sensitivity feat (which provides access to the Use the Force skill) and the Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber) feat are available only as starting feats to the Jedi heroic class.

An easy way to speed you along your path is to have your character acquire at least one level in the Jedi class. Remember that this Jedi training does not have to be as a part of the Order; it can be from a variety of traditions similar to the Jedi Order or simply be the first



step of training by a Sith master.

Don't want your character to have been a Jedi or to have had Jedi-like training? You can meet the requirements using your non-class dependent feats, which are gained at 1st level, 3rd level, 6th level, and every three levels thereafter. At 1st level, by purchasing the Force Sensitivity feat, you are allowed to treat Use the Force as a class skill, which you can then choose as one of your starting trained skills. Later, choose Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber), and you now have a character eligible for the Sith apprentice prestige class, regardless of his background.

If your character is Human, it's even easier because he receives one bonus feat and one bonus trained skill at creation. For example, you can choose Force Sensitivity and Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber) as your character's starting feats and make Use the Force your bonus trained skill (which he has access to through the former feat).

The simplest option is to simply declare your character's first class to be Jedi, in which case you gain everything you need to eventually become Sith.



To develop Force powers during this time, your character needs to meet two of the same requirements -- having the Force Sensitivity feat and being trained in Use the Force. Once you meet those requirements, you can select the Force Training feat. This feat is not offered as a bonus feat in any heroic class, so the only way to get it is through the feats your character acquires as a result of character level, not class level.

Choosing a Class

Once you figure out how to meet the requirements for the Sith apprentice prestige class, you have room to play. You have at least six, if not seven, levels.

- If you wish your Sith to be manipulative and deceitful, the Noble class is the way to go. Starting in the Noble heroic class nets you more trained skills than any other heroic class, among which are Deception, Gather Information, and Persuasion.
- Starting in the Scout heroic class nets you the second largest number of trained skills, among which are those that make a fiercely independent Sith, such as Climb, Endurance, Jump, Survival, and Swim, as well as the Shake It Off feat.
- The Scoundrel heroic class, as a starting class, nets you the manipulative ways of the Noble (though with fewer trained skills), adding the benefits of Acrobatics and Stealth for those Sith wishing to be shadow warriors.
- For those on the path of a deadly predator, starting in the Soldier heroic class is the way to go. Though your character won't have many trained skills, he will be geared toward aspects of combat, and the sheer number of starting weapon proficiencies makes up for it.

These guidelines are appropriate for choosing the heroic class in which to begin your character's path towards the Sith. Once you begin to multiclass, it becomes more about the feats and talents. We'll discuss those more in the next section.

Choosing a Species

Some species are predisposed to the Sith or have natural advantages that lend themselves well to the darker path.

- Bothans can make dangerous Sith, but only when the Rule of Two is in place. Their manipulative and crafty natures make them vicious in a world of stealth and guile. If they have Gather Information as a trained skill, they gain Skill Focus (Gather Information) as a bonus feat, and they have access to the Bothan SpyNet.
- Some Quarren who endured the devastation of their homeworld during the Galactic Civil War live with so much pain and hate that they might be drawn naturally to the ways of the dark side.
- Natural hunters, Force-sensitive Rodians can find their aggression and tenacity bringing them toward the world of a Sith warrior. Their Heightened Awareness and low-light vision can be of great benefit to the Rodian Sith warrior, giving them the ability to notice danger before many others and to strike more effectively under cover of darkness. However, they are poor deceivers (thanks to their -2 Charisma) and are better suited for more violent pursuits.
- Sullustans are a race whose curiosity can easily lead to recklessness, and it is those same traits that can bring about the downfall of the Sullustan Jedi who finds himself fascinated by the ways of the dark side. Like Rodians, their darkvision and Heightened Awareness can be an advantage for the Sith warrior, giving them the ability to notice danger in advance and even more utility for striking from the shadows.
- The violent and driven nature of the Trandoshans lends itself well to the path of the Sith, as do their natural combative abilities. They make deadly Sith warriors, with their darkvision, Limb Regeneration, and Natural Armor abilities, plus the bonus Toughness feat. They can take more punishment than most.
- Though Twi'leks often try to avoid open conflict, their tendency to live in the shadows can bring those who master the Force to the stealth and guile of the Sith who live in the ages of the Rule of Two. Their +2 Charisma and Deceptive ability make them masters of manipulation.
- The adventurous nature of the Zabrak likewise can be drawn to explore the mysteries of the dark side, and their adaptation to living in a tough environment serves them well as Sith warriors (as evidenced by Darth Maul). Their Heightened Awareness and Superior Defenses abilities are of particular use.
- Still, Humans make up the bulk of the Sith. The natural chaos of their emotions is capable of producing the warping passion necessary to create a Sith Lord. Many of the most powerful, terrifying, and notorious Sith Lords through history have been Human or near-Human, including Exar Kun, Darth Malak, Darth Bane, Darth Sidious, Darth Vader, and Darth Krayt. Furthermore, their bonus feat and bonus trained skill give them more room to play when developing on their way to the dark side.

Possible Paths

Although there are many ways to craft a Sith, this section covers three main paths: the Sith Manipulator, the Sith Warrior, and the Fallen Jedi. Let's walk through the start of each kind of character through the final step of becoming a Sith apprentice at 7th level in terms of skills, feats, talents, and powers.

The Sith Manipulator

At 1st level, this character begins in the Noble heroic class. He begins with Linguist, Weapon Proficiency (pistols), and Weapon Proficiency (simple weapons) as starting feats, plus the Force Sensitivity feat. For talents, he begins with Wealth from the Lineage tree. He also begins with Deception, Gather Information, Knowledge (Bureaucracy), Perception, Persuasion, and Use the Force as trained skills (plus any additional based on his Intelligence bonus). The corruption destiny is his path.



By the time he reaches 3rd level, he has added the Strong in the Force and Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber)

feats, as well as the Presence talent from the Influence tree.

By 5th level, he has increased both his Wisdom and Charisma attributes by one point each. He also adds the Force Training feat and the Weaken Resolve talent from the Influence tree. The Force Training feat confers one Force power, *mind trick* (plus, most likely, a few extra based on the character's Wisdom bonus).

At 7th level, he completes the Noble heroic class and enters the Sith apprentice prestige class, finally reaching his goal. He either has behaved in such a way to garner the appropriate number of Dark Side Points or will automatically get them by falling to the corruption of the Sith and completing his destiny. He has added the Force Deception talent from the Sith tree and the Force Training feat twice more, giving him *Force lightning* and *rebuke* (plus possible others based on his Wisdom bonus). He also chooses a new destiny, either destruction or discovery.

The Sith Warrior

At 1st level, this character begins in the Soldier heroic class. He begins with Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Weapon Proficiency (pistols), Weapon Proficiency (rifles), and Weapon Proficiency (simple weapons) as starting feats, plus the Force Sensitivity feat. For talents, he begins with the Armored Defense from the Armor Specialist tree. He also begins with the Initiative, Perception, and Use the Force as trained skills (plus any additional skills based on his Intelligence bonus). The corruption destiny is his path.

By the time he reaches 3rd level, he has added the Weapon Focus (lightsaber) and Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber) feats, as well as the Penetrating Attack talent from the Weapon Specialist tree.

By 5th level, he has increased both his Strength and Dexterity attributes by one point each. He also adds the Force Training feat and the Power of the Dark Side talent from the Dark Side force talent tree. The Force Training feat confers one Force power, *dark rage* (plus possible others based on the character's Wisdom bonus).

At 7th level, he completes the Soldier heroic class and enters the Sith apprentice prestige class, finally reaching his goal. Like the Manipulator, he either has behaved in such a way to garner the appropriate number of Dark Side Points or will automatically get them by falling to the corruption of the Sith and completing his destiny. He also adds the Deflect talent from the Lightsaber Combat tree, either the Dual Weapon Mastery I or Power Attack feat (depending on whether his Dexterity or Strength qualifies), and the Force Training feat, which gives him the *Force slam* power. He also chooses a new corruption or destruction destiny.

The Fallen Jedi

At 1st level, this character begins in the Jedi heroic class. He begins with Force Sensitivity, Weapon Proficiency (lightsabers), and Weapon Proficiency (simple weapons) as starting feats, plus the Force Training feat, which yields him the Force power *surge* (plus possible others based on his Wisdom bonus). For talents, he begins with the Deflect talent from the Lightsaber Combat tree. He also begins with Acrobatics and Use the Force as trained skills (plus any additional skills based on his Intelligence bonus). The corruption destiny is his path.

By the time he reaches 3rd level, he has added the Force Training feat twice, which gives him the Force powers *mind trick* and *move object* (plus possible others based on his Wisdom modifier) and the Force Perception talent from the Sense talent tree.



By 5th level, he has increased both his Strength and his Wisdom attributes by one point each. He has also added the Force Training feat, giving him the Force power *farseeing*, as well as the Visions talent from the Sense talent tree.

At 7th level, he completes the Jedi heroic class and enters the Sith apprentice prestige class, finally reaching his goal. Like the Sith Manipulator, he either has behaved in such a way to garner the appropriate number of Dark Side Points or will automatically get them by falling to the corruption of the Sith and completing his destiny. He has also added the Dark Scourge talent from the Sith talent tree as well as the Force Training feat twice, which gives him the Force powers *Force grip* and *negate energy* (plus any additional powers based on his Wisdom bonus). He also chooses a new corruption or destruction destiny.

Next Time

In the next installment of "Behind the Threat: The Sith," we'll explore the tools of the Sith as well as advancement paths for Sith characters.

Feel free to post your thoughts or questions about this article in [this message board thread](#).

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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Behind the Threat: The Sith (Part 4)

The Teeth in the Darkness

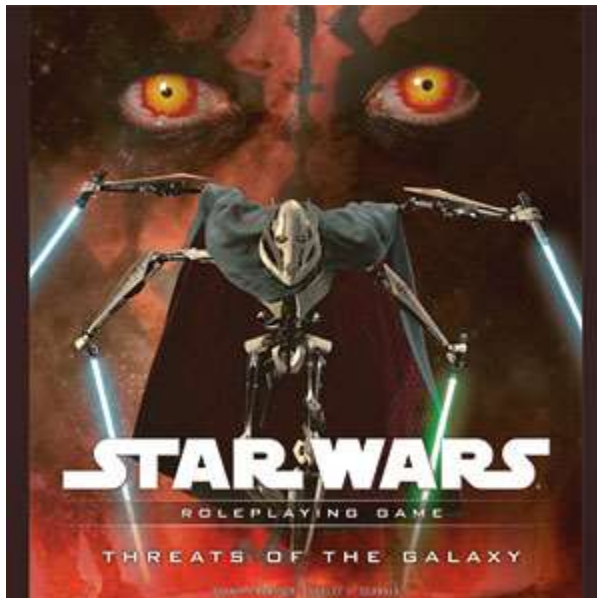
Matthew Grau

Previous installments of "Behind the Threat: The Sith" looked at the essence of the Sith, choosing an appropriate name and appearance for your Sith character, and the game mechanics of designing that character. In this article, we delve into the technology used by Sith, the kinds of characters that best fit in the different eras, and ways to advance beyond the Sith apprentice prestige class.

Technology

The most notable piece of technology associated with a Sith is the lightsaber. This ancient and elegant weapon is the tool of both the Jedi and the Sith.

To the Jedi, the crafting of a lightsaber is a sacred task. Apprentices are taken to the ritual caves that hold the crystals necessary to create the focused core of the Jedi's weapon. The assembly is part technical, part manipulation of the Force. When it is done, the color of a lightsaber depends on the type of crystal used in its creation. Yellow, blue, and green are common. Some instead hunt far and wide for their crystal, with results (such as Mace Windu's violet lightsaber) that are the stuff of legends.



To the Sith, this is needlessly ritualistic. A lightsaber is a tool like any other, and all that matters is its wielder. For this reason, the Sith artificially grow the crystals for their lightsabers. The outcome of such is consistent and distinct -- all Sith lightsabers are red.

The double-bladed lightsaber is the notorious weapon wielded by Darth Maul during the Rise of the Empire era. These tricky weapons take time to master, but they can make one man fight as two. Some mistakenly believe that Darth Maul created the weapon, when in fact it was first unleashed under the fury of the Sith Lord Exar Kun in ancient times. Those Sith Lords who lean toward the savagery of physical violence may find themselves drawn to the artistry and deadliness of the double-bladed lightsaber.

Normally, attacking with both ends of a double-bladed lightsaber incurs a -10 penalty to both attacks. The Dual Weapon Mastery feats will dramatically reduce that penalty. The first level, which reduces the penalty to -5, can be taken during character creation. Dual Weapon Mastery II and III require higher Dexterity scores and advanced levels to acquire. Unless your character has a high Strength modifier or the Weapon Focus feat, Dual Weapon Mastery II is what's needed to be truly deadly. Since this feat requires a high Dexterity, the Weapon Finesse feat can offset these penalties nicely. The Force power *dark rage* also helps.



The Sith lanvarok is a wrist-mounted projectile weapon from ancient times, exceedingly rare by the days of the Clone Wars. Inaccurate and with a long reload time, the lanvarok hurled a spray of metal discs to distract an enemy or as a weapon of first attack. However, Sith could use the Force to guide the discs, making them far more dangerous than the weapon would be in the hands of a normal wielder. (For details on the lanvarok, see

pages 68-69 of the *Knights of the Old Republic Campaign Guide*.)

The Sith, like the Jedi, travel light. As long as they have robes, a cloak (probably all-temperature), and a lightsaber, they are content. Some also travel with currency and a utility belt that might contain three days' worth of food capsules, a medpac, a tool kit, a spare power pack, a spare energy cell, a glow rod, a liquid cable dispenser with grappling hook, an aquata breather, electrobinoculars, or a few specialized tools with which to do one's dark will. The Sith are happy to rely on their wits and their exceptional power.

Certain starfighters might appeal to a Sith Lord. Those who were once Jedi may prefer a Jedi fighter to other craft. Those who served before the days of the Clone Wars would pilot the *Aethersprite* Interceptor, whereas those who fought in the Clone Wars would prefer the Eta-2 *Actis* Interceptor. Those in the favor of Count Dooku might also receive one of the rare and exotic *Ginivex*-class starfighters. During the Knights of the Old Republic era, the Sith had their own starfighters, known as Sith Interceptors. Only one craft was designed for the Sith in the Rise of the Empire, Rebellion, and The New Jedi Order eras -- a prototype that is owned by Darth Sidious and carefully guarded. The Sith Infiltrator is truly a craft worthy of the tradition of the Sith Lords. (All these craft are found in *Starships of the Galaxy*: the *Aethersprite* Interceptor on p. 60, the Eta-2 *Actis* Interceptor on p. 82, the *Ginivex* on p. 87, the Sith Interceptor on p. 130, and the Sith Infiltrator on p. 128.)



Planet-side, Sith Lords prefer speeder bikes for their speed and maneuverability. The reflexes of a Force-user also make the bikes far less dangerous and more effective than they might be for the average person. For similar reasons, when bikes are impractical, Sith instead might choose racing or military speeders.

Eras

The era in which you choose to play has great bearing on what kind of Sith your character can be.

The Knights of the Old Republic era can call for any kind of Sith because they are prevalent in the universe. There will be more warriors than any other kind; the strongest of the Sith are those who rule. Characters with strong backgrounds in the Jedi, Soldier, and perhaps Scout heroic classes will be the most common, favoring skills and feats designed to enhance combat ability and Force powers.

The Rise of the Empire, the Rebellion, and The New Jedi Order eras call for the Rule of Two, which requires the ways of stealth and guile. However, all Sith are trained as warriors as well, since one Sith must be a match for several Jedi. Characters with backgrounds in either Noble or Scoundrel heroic classes, balanced with Jedi and either Soldier or Scout, are more the order of the day, favoring skills of manipulation and intimidation as well as those of combat.

The Legacy era begins with the Rule of Two and follows the same maxims as the previous three eras. However, once Darth Krayt takes his rightful place in the universe, the Sith flood out again. Warriors again are common, as they were in the Knights of the Old Republic era.

Advancement Paths

Once you have arrived at the Sith apprentice prestige class, your character is now true Sith. It's been a bit of a journey so far, but where do you go from here?

Unless you have chosen a diverse array of classes (either prestige or heroic) as your character's background, you have only a few directions in which to grow. The four talent trees from which a Sith apprentice draws are the Armor Specialist tree (from the Soldier heroic class), the Duelist tree (from the Jedi Knight prestige class), the Lightsaber Combat trees (from the Jedi heroic class), and the Sith tree, the only unique tree in this class. Your character's abilities will now aim toward vicious combat and growing in the dark side of the Force.

If you have chosen a diversity of classes as your character's background, you'll have more room to play. You can continue to develop your character in other classes that can support his growth as a Sith, using the guidelines presented in the last article.

One unique way your character can develop is with the Dreadful Countenance feat, as presented in ["Behind the Threat: The Sith \(Part 2\)."](#) It is a feat solely devoted to the way Sith change in appearance and the effect it has on them. The requirements for the feat are a Charisma of 13 and membership in the Sith tradition, the latter accomplished by reaching the Sith apprentice prestige class.



Upon becoming a member of the Sith apprentice prestige class, your character will have access to Force techniques, which represent a deeper understanding of the Force. Starting at 2nd level, he gains a new Force technique every other level, improving and extending other mechanical uses of the Force.

As your Sith apprentice grows in levels, he gains access to the more advanced prestige classes. The most obvious place to go is the Sith Lord prestige class. There are only two requirements that differ from the Sith apprentice: your character must be at least



12th level and must know at least one Force technique. At this point, your character is purged of fear and begins to learn the secrets of the Force, which allow him to start using Force powers in new and powerful ways, but, unlike Force techniques, they cost Force Points to use. At 2nd level and every level of Sith Lord thereafter, your character gains one Force secret. Levels in the Sith Lord prestige class do not offer access to new talent trees, instead continuing to develop in the Sith tree and the Force trees. However, your character becomes adept at using the dread tradition known as Dun Möch, which lets him tempt others to the dark side.

The Force disciple is another advanced prestige class that might be an option for a growing Sith. This class represents a Sith who wishes to delve more deeply into the mysteries of the dark side, becoming a prophet. Your character becomes immune to mind-affecting effects, gains prophetic visions, and gains access to Force secrets. His talents come from those available to a Force adept and from the Force trees. In addition to the requirements of the Sith apprentice prestige class, the Force disciple prestige class requires that your character is 12th level and has the Force power *farseeing*. Also, it requires at least three levels of the Force adept prestige class, since there is no other way to acquire two talents from the trees offered there.

Another interesting option, if you are willing to take the extra time, is to have your character work his way up through the Jedi ranks to reach the Jedi Master prestige class. The only requirements beyond those needed to reach Sith apprentice are that your character is 12th level, has one Force technique (easily gained through two levels of Jedi Knight), and is a member of the Jedi tradition. He becomes fearless, gains meditative focus, and learns Force secrets. The Jedi Master prestige class confers no new talent trees, instead focusing on the Duelist tree and the Force trees. In general, if your character follows this path to Sith Lord, it will take longer, but he will have access to a variety of Force-related powers and abilities to make up for it. Just imagine the power of a Jedi Master who has advanced through the ranks of the Jedi and Jedi Knight classes -- he will be very dangerous when he finally falls to the dark side.

If your character has already fulfilled his destiny and taken on the mantle of Sith master, the education destiny might be in order. Perhaps he will play an important part in training a dreadful Sith who has his own destiny to wreak upon the galaxy. The bonus for fulfilling this destiny is a +5 bonus to one class skill of your choice, which

is particularly useful when applied to Use the Force.

Next Time

In the next article, we'll explore ways to use the Sith in your game, either as heroes or as villains on the other side of the table.

Check out the Behind the Threat archives!

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 1: Portrayal](#)

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 2: The Becoming](#)

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 3: Design](#)

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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Behind the Threat: The Sith (Part 5)

Antiheroes

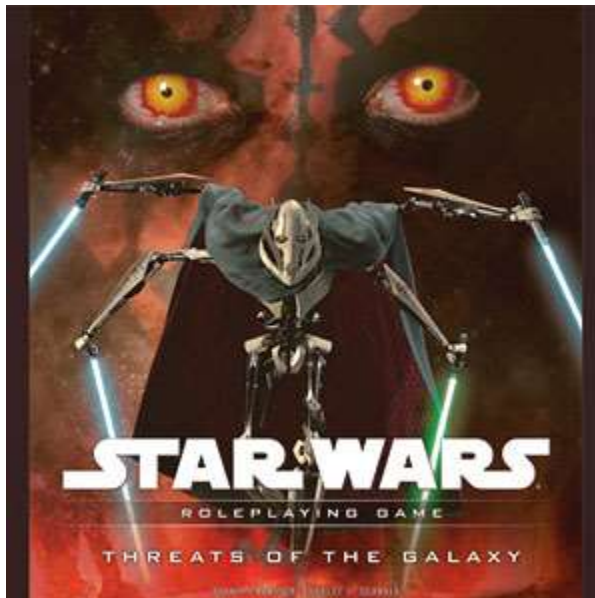
Matthew Grau

In the last several articles (see the archive below), we examined how to create a Sith character from the ground up using Saga Edition mechanics. But what if you're a Gamemaster and you want to include Sith characters in your playing group?

Your first consideration involves how many Sith you'll have in the group. Some groups might be composed of all Sith, and others might feature only one or a few Sith while the rest are characters who complement them. There are advantages and challenges to both.

All-Sith Groups

The advantage to creating all-Sith groups is they are cut from the same cloth. They are adherents to the dark side of the Force and share solidarity of philosophy and purpose. However, the danger with all-Sith groups is obvious -- in-fighting. The strongest Sith rules, and those under him will no doubt test him. Some Sith are satisfied with their place, while others constantly strive for authority.



You could agree with your group that one of them is in charge so that dissent doesn't percolate within the ranks, though such an approach is hardly realistic given Sith nature. Another option is to have the characters be equals who are under the thumb of a significantly stronger Sith. But what happens if the alpha dog is vanquished? Try to work out such concerns in advance unless you desire a group of duplicitous characters who are at each others' throats. Whether or not you like this dynamic, you should steer your players toward such behavior, even if they don't gravitate toward it themselves. It isn't optional; it's the nature of the Sith.

Perhaps the best way to deal with this problem is simply to strike an understanding among your players and build such competition into the plot. If your players intentionally create rivalries, with an agreement not to let them get in the way of broader gameplay, they can portray their Sith characters appropriately without obstructing the game or creating bad blood. In short, work it out and turn it into part of the story instead of leaving it to whims.

Groups With One Sith

On the other hand, the advantage to creating groups with only one or a few Sith characters is that the other characters won't typically care about whether the strongest is leading. These kind of groups can create a more harmonious dynamic, but remember, the Sith are selfish and serve themselves above all others. Because of their belief in strength and superiority, the Sith might begin to treat the other characters as lackeys and playthings. Of course, this can prove tremendously entertaining for the Gamemaster, and even the players, if the other characters would not normally choose to be in league with a Sith. How will they react once they unravel the identity of their new friend? How will they react once they come to understand that they've struck a deal with the devil in order to succeed in a mission?

Again, the best solution to these problems is to work things out ahead of time. Depending on the type of game, some characters might not mind being lackeys of the Sith -- especially if the rewards for service are significant. The Sith can promise many things that appeal to many morally questionable individuals. If the rest of the characters are unaware that they've struck a bargain with a Sith, determine how that might play out before you get there. Otherwise, it is almost guaranteed to disrupt your group and the long-term goals of the game. Building this kind of plot twist into your story will create drama instead of chaos.



The type of group you create also depends upon the era in which you choose to play. In eras where the Sith are plentiful (like the Knights of the Old Republic or Legacy eras), all-Sith groups are the order of the day and capable of operating openly. In eras dominated by the Rule of Two (like the Rise of the Empire, Rebellion, or The New Jedi Order eras), it makes sense to have one Sith in a group of characters who work within his or her plans. For example, in the Rise of the Empire or Rebellion eras, a group might consist of one Sith and several Dark Jedi or dark side Force adepts.

Group Origins

The next quandary to solve is how the character group came to be. Why are they working together? Maybe they have common goals or common enemies. How did they come together? Perhaps they had masters who were comrades, or maybe they stumbled across one another during a mission.

Adventure Hooks

Once you have your group figured out, it's time to play. In games revolving around the Sith, even more so than in other games, it's important to give the characters challenges and goals. It might be tempting to give Sith space to mess around as the dark terrors that they are, but without serious challenges and plans, they will eventually turn on each other in boredom.

In eras where the Rule of Two is predominant, you will have to create adventures in which the Sith play it safe and have long-reaching goals. The other trick here is to create such adventures in a way that does not violate *Star Wars* canon. In eras where the Sith dominate, you can easily create adventures in such a way that the characters float from confrontation to confrontation without worry of stealth or canon.

On that note, here are a few adventure hooks to give you guidelines. The hooks are categorized by era, but some might be able to be modified to work in other eras.

Knights of the Old Republic Era

In an era dominated by the Sith, one kind of adventure revolves around the quest for the legacy of the Sith. This involves hunting down hidden places of Sith power long abandoned by the rest of the galaxy, chasing down legends to uncover lost secrets, and experimenting with forgotten and perhaps even forbidden power and alchemy.

As a specific example, your Sith characters might stumble across an ancient holocron after taking a Jedi outpost or vessel. The Jedi did not open the holocron because doing so requires opening oneself up to the dark side; instead, they hoped to bury it in their archives forever. However, your group opens the holocron and discovers the secrets within, which speak of an insignificant moon named Oricon lost now in the Outer Rim. An ancient Sith named Darth Vitus used the moon as a place to experiment with and expand his already-significant knowledge of Sith alchemy. The holocron provides hints on how to find Oricon, and the hunt is an adventure on its own. Once the moon is found, the characters face the descendents of Darth Vitus's experiments -- horrible monsters, many

of which are strong in the power of the dark side. The characters might eventually find Darth Vitus's compound, in which they could uncover powerful secrets to aid them in their war against the Jedi.

Rise of the Empire Era

In an era exemplified by the Rule of Two, it will be challenging to create adventures that don't violate canon. As we know from the *Star Wars* films, Darth Sidious rules the Sith in this era, with only three apprentices that we know of -- first Darth Maul, then Darth Tyranus, then Darth Vader. However, we also know that Darth Vader had a secret apprentice, and it's possible for Sith groups in different parts of the galaxy to have reason to keep their existence a secret, even from other Sith.



As a specific example, your group could be composed of a secret Sith apprentice trained by Darth Vader to hunt the last of the remaining Jedi (effectively using the basis for the *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* video game). This kind of adventure would take place after Order 66 had been executed and the Empire had been born. Underneath the secret Sith apprentice could be a group of Dark Jedi, finally able to be out in the open under the Emperor's reign, or a group of clone troopers trained to fight such a worthy prey. This hunt begins on the trail of Sarn Vals, a Quarren Jedi Knight, whose presence was implicated after a mysterious disturbance in the Corporate Sector.

Rebellion Era

Again, this era suffers the restrictions of canon and the Rule of Two. However, a situation similar to the one proposed in the Rise of the Empire era would work just as well. The Jedi are all but gone, so a secret Sith apprentice might lead special strike teams against the Rebel Alliance. Most likely, such teams will be composed of Dark Jedi or elite Stormtroopers. You still have the option of creating groups in the fringes of the Empire that want nothing to do with the plans of Darth Sidious.

As a specific example, your group might be one of Darth Vader's pet teams, led by his secret apprentice. Since the Jedi are no longer a threat, Vader has given the group the most sensitive and distasteful missions in the Empire. Through the capture and interrogation of a Bothan spy, he has learned that the Rebellion is being aided

on the distant planet of Rentean in the Outer Rim. The Human inhabitants of the planet are secretly building starfighters for the Alliance. The group is sent in to infiltrate the secret shipbuilding facility, destroy it, and teach the locals what it means to aid the enemies of the Empire -- a lesson they won't soon forget.

The New Jedi Order Era

You need clever ideas to create workable Sith adventures for this era, since canon limits it greatly. Any Sith would have to have been hidden for some time or Dark Jedi who stumbled across holocrons or something similar. Their activities must remain secret; canon shows that the Dark Lady Lumiya is the closest thing to Sith encountered in this era by the New Republic. However, Lumiya herself encounters Sith on Korriban during the Legacy era, and they most certainly would be active during the Yuuzhan Vong war.



As a specific example, your group could consist of several Sith who never subscribed to the Rule of Two but were unable to operate openly due to the enormous power and long reach of Darth Sidious. Now that he's gone, these Sith grow in power on the Outer Rim, recruiting new apprentices from among the Force-sensitive. Stealth and guile still prevail, but under the auspices of building an army that can go out into the galaxy to carve out a piece of the New Republic for a new Sith Empire.

Legacy Era

Once again, the Sith emerge *en masse* under Darth Krayt. Groups can occupy any number of roles in the new Empire and can operate openly and with authority. There is resistance to be crushed and old secrets to be unearthed.

As a specific example, your group could repeat history and be Jedi Hunters during the Sith-Imperial War. This time, however, instead of being one Sith and a group of Dark Jedi (or troopers), your group consists only of Sith characters. A Jedi conclave has been striking out against the forces of Emperor Fel and Darth Krayt from a secret hiding place, which your characters have been tasked with finding. Once they have been located, the Jedi are to be wiped out. Of course, things are rarely what they seem -- the Jedi are setting a trap.

Next Time

In the next article, we'll explore how you as a Gamemaster can effectively use the Sith as major antagonists in your adventures.

Check out the Behind the Threat archives!

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 1: Portrayal](#)
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Power Beyond Belief

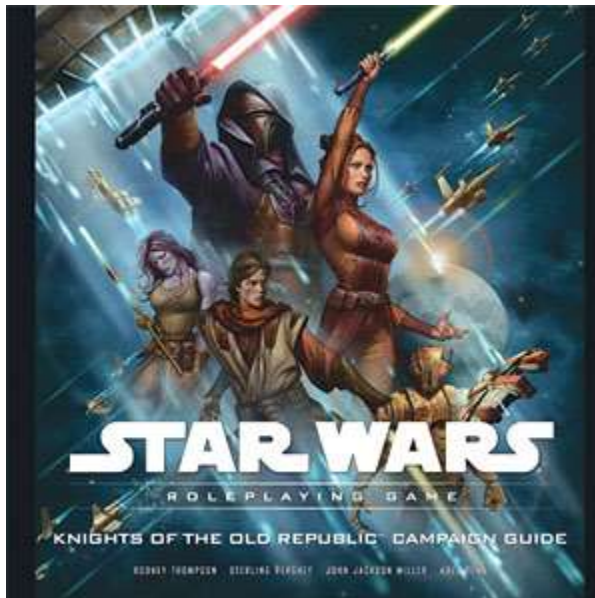
Using Ultra-Powerful Sith Lords in Saga Edition

Sterling Hershey

Amazingly dark and devastating powers are the purview of some of the greatest Sith Lords of the Knights of the Old Republic era. They cheat death repeatedly. They devastate and consume entire worlds with a thought. They bend and twist the Force to their needs and desires as the dark side warps them into tools of its own. Average beings stand no chance of stopping these ultra-powerful monsters of the dark side. Only the greatest heroes may ultimately defeat them.

In the ***Star Wars Roleplaying Game*** Saga Edition, using such powerful characters presents many challenges to the Gamemaster and game system itself. This is especially true when balancing story issues with game mechanics. As a GM, how do you handle characters with powers that are far beyond those that the heroes possess?

In the [*Knights of the Old Republic Campaign Guide*](#), the approach taken to adjudicating these powers uses a combination of story devices, Destiny Points, and existing talents, feats, and powers. In this article, we discuss this method. We also provide alternative ideas for GM who wish to apply similar abilities to their own villains by creating specialized mechanics.



Using Powers as Story Devices

The true function of some ultra-powerful abilities is as a story device. Each Sith Lord's power is specific to that character, created through his or her unique circumstances and developed to suit specific plot points. They are unique powers, with no expectation of duplication by other Sith Lords. They are also not powers likely (or able) to be shared or taught to an apprentice.

Using a power as a story device gives GMs maximum flexibility in creating and using their own powerful Sith Lords. The power simply operates as required to fit the plot. However, it is important to realize that while these dark abilities are devastatingly powerful, they are also limited in scope. They generally do not provide a great variety of powers; instead, they dramatically boost a single power or a limited number of related abilities.

Powers used as story devices should be more cinematic in nature and rarely used directly against the heroes. They are best used to shock, frighten, or horrify the heroes and drive the plot forward. If this type of power is used directly against the heroes, be prepared to allow them to make skill checks, make attacks, or use other abilities to escape or mitigate its effects. It should not be easy, requiring high skill DCs or even the use of a Force Point or Destiny Point.

Using Destiny Points

A second way to emulate an ultra-powerful ability is through the creative use of Destiny Points. This encourages creative descriptions that relate to the ability's main use. Since there are a limited number of Destiny Points, this automatically restricts the number of uses a given power has. This implementation works best with characters that fight against or otherwise interact with the heroes, where tighter integration with familiar mechanics may appeal to a player's sense of fair play.

Using Destiny Points is a great way to account for powerful abilities in combat. Scoring an automatic critical hit

could be described as channeling a unique power instead of making a simple blaster shot or lightsaber strike. An automatic miss could be described as the absorption of a vast amount of power or deflecting an attack miraculously through the Force, rather than the simple avoidance of an attack. The ability to act out of turn could emulate a character's amazing quickness on the battlefield or his ability to strike the heroes at an unexpected moment. Even using a Destiny Point to immediately gain 3 Force Points could be described in a manner that makes a character seem like he is rejuvenating himself in a mystical fashion, even though he may not use the actual Force Points until later in the encounter. The GM is under no obligation to specify the mechanics behind the effects during the game. However, she should consider doing so after the fact so that the players understand what is happening -- even if their characters do not.

Gamemasters may find it useful to combine this option with the story device method. The Sith Lord might gain the regular Destiny Point benefits or alternative benefits as dictated by the GM. While the story device provides the overall special ability and justifications for the existence of a power, using Destiny Points allows for limitations on that power. This can be especially useful for new GM characters that the heroes must ultimately defeat. After all, just because an ability is extremely powerful, that doesn't mean its use is unlimited. Over a long adventure or campaign, the heroes might battle an enemy many times, whittling away at his supply of Destiny Points until it is exhausted -- and the enemy is finally defeated.

Examples in Play



Here are a few examples using these techniques, as applied in the [Knights of the Old Republic Campaign Guide](#). Spoiler warning: If you have not completed the video game **Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords**, you might wish to skip these examples, since they contain some spoilers.

Darth Nihilus is literally a destroyer of worlds, powered by an insatiable hunger that drives him to consume greater and greater populations. While one may reasonably expect someone fallen to the dark side to employ Force lightning against a foe, no one expects a fleet of starships commanded by Sith Lords consuming entire planets. Nor would Nihilus tolerate such a rival and competitor for his sustenance. Given the Sith Lord's unique background, it is not the type of ability that would be taught to an apprentice.

From a game mechanics point of view, there is little need to spend time developing rules and restrictions for such a unique power. It is a story device. From the GM's perspective, Darth Nihilus consumes a world when the plot requires it. However, lesser aspects of his terrible hunger might be used directly against the heroes. These abilities are better emulated by the use of Force talents, powers, secrets, and techniques. In this case, the GM should describe the use of such a talent, like Drain Force, in a manner that suggests that it is powered by his unnatural hunger.

As another example, Darth Sion embodies the unbeatable enemy. He's a Sith so vile that he channels his own anger through the Force to keep himself alive even though he should be dead. Thanks to his intense anger and pain, he literally holds his decaying body together through the dark side of the Force.

Darth Sion's continued existence is best described as a story device, rather than as a specialized Force power that requires constant rolls to keep Sion whole. However, even though the character may believe that his ability to escape death is nearly infinite, it is actually limited by his Destiny Points in an unusual way. When taking a final hit that would normally kill him, he spends a Destiny Point to cause the attack to miss, and his story device background returns him to full hit points and the top of the condition track. Darth Sion cannot be defeated until his Destiny Points are exhausted. Once they are gone, he feels the loss of power, loses the will to fight, and begins to question his existence. From this point, he is susceptible to the Exile's attempts to persuade him to give up his life as a much-desired escape from his painful existence.

Alternative Mechanics

In their home games, some GMs might wish to use mechanics that emulate a story device or unusual power beyond what regular Force powers, feats, talents, and class abilities already provide. A GM could create a new Force power, but that implies that the ability could be learned by other Force users, including the heroes. If that works for your campaign, and the limitations of using it in the Force power suite works for your character concept, it is an acceptable option.



However, these ideas usually involve abilities that are beyond the scope of a single Force power. In this case, the Special Quality comes into play. Special Qualities are normally reserved for special class features from prestige classes or for unusual abilities used by certain beasts that are not connected to a feat.

In this case, the GM could define the new powerful ability as a Special Quality and write a specific rule that dictates how the power operates every time. This is best used for a power that does not evolve or change over time. It is also expected that this is a narrowly defined mechanic. A power with multiple aspects might require several Special Quality descriptions.

For an example of a Special Quality that covers part of Darth Sion's abilities, here is one based on his similar ability in the **Star Wars Miniatures Game**:

Eternal Hatred: Whenever this character would be killed, make a DC 10 Wisdom check; if successful, this character is restored to full hit points and returned to the top of the condition track instead of being defeated.

Heroes and Powerful Abilities

Inevitably, some Knights of the Old Republic fans and players will want to turn their PCs into ultra-powerful Force-using characters. While the official products assume that the heroes act heroically, some GMs and players may wish to try a campaign or adventure based on the dark side or to create a character that requires redemption.

Allowing a player character to gain such powerful abilities poses all of the same difficulties as that of a GM character -- without the GM's direct adjudication of the power's use. Therefore, it is best to clearly define the extent of the power's use before play begins. Powers that function as story devices are probably the most difficult

to craft and use. In that case, both the GM and the player must agree when the power could come into play. Powers based on Destiny Points would be the most limiting in terms of the amount of use. They are most easily used to enhance Force powers, talents, or similar abilities that already exist in the game. Special Qualities are easily the most adaptable option, allowing the GM and player to craft a specific power suited to the campaign.

However, there should be a cost to developing dark side abilities. It should be significant and impose a considerable penalty on the character's ability to accomplish other tasks. The severity of the cost and penalty should be proportional to the usefulness and extent of the creative power.

Disfigurement is the most obvious type of cost. Most powerful Sith Lords suffer some kind of major physical deformity or disfigurement. A character who takes on a strong power should suffer a similar fate. It should penalize one or more ability scores, including Charisma. For more on generating the look of a Sith character (whether a player character or a GM character), see the article [Behind the Threat: The Sith, Part 2](#).

Fortunately, handling ultra-powerful characters is a rare occurrence in Saga Edition. Though they are beyond the scope of the average game, they make excellent villains and plot devices. Defeating ultra-powerful characters is also a worthy goal for any long-term campaign. They make effective antagonists for heroes of virtually any level, though only the greatest heroes may ultimately overcome them.

About the Author

Sterling Hershey is an architect and freelance game designer. He regularly creates **Star Wars Miniatures** and *Starship Battles* scenarios and previews for the Wizards of the Coast web site. He is one of the authors of the *Knights of the Old Republic Campaign Guide* and *The Force Unleashed Campaign Guide*, plus other products and online articles for the **Star Wars Roleplaying Game** Saga Edition. You can read more about gaming in a galaxy far, far away in his starwars.com blog, [Delusions of Grandeur](#). Sterling lives in the Midwest with his wife, Mary.