

LEGENDARY RESISTANCE
ALTERNATIVES



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INTRODUCTION

As players get into tiers 3/4, they gain more and more encounter-ending abilities: *banishment*, *hold monster*, etc...

Legendary Resistances are there to act as a buffer: they prevent an otherwise epic encounter from ending after a single bad die roll on the first round of combat, which would be anticlimactic.

However, there could be other game mechanics which could fill the same role. Whether you are dissatisfied with Legendary Resistances, or simply want to spice up combat by introducing a bit of variety, this small supplement presents a collection of monster traits and mechanics to replace LRs.

These mechanics should not significantly change a boss monster's challenge rating, and they can easily be introduced in the middle of an ongoing adventure.

You could also give these to a monster who did not have legendary resistances to begin with - but if you do, consider increasing the creature's challenge rating accordingly, see page 279 of your *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more detail.

This supplement is the result of a video on my Youtube channel, [Game Changer](#).

The problem with LRs. There are three main complaints about this mechanic:

- When a boss monster uses one, it often feels like nothing was accomplished, especially with "save or suck" spells.
- It's never quite clear what it looks like when a boss monster uses one.
- It makes de-buff and control focused characters useless in tier 3/4 - at that point, they almost always re-spec into either damage or support roles, because it's almost always easier to kill a boss than it is to end the encounter in any other way.

There are two alternatives to legendary resistances built into the game, but neither is particularly good:

1. Adding minions to the battle. The problem is that most monsters who have legendary resistances also have legendary actions - they are designed to be solo threats who do not need minions. By adding minion to a fight against a legendary creature, we tend to tip the scales of the action economy, and dramatically increase the time it takes to run the encounter.
2. Incapacitating player characters to prevent them from using the encounter-ending effects. This is a fairly unpopular solution due to how it stops players from actually playing the game.

This is why legendary resistances are one of the main reasons behind the lack of popularity of epic tier gameplay. This document aims to alleviate those issues by providing alternatives.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Instead of a single standard mechanic, used by every single legendary monster, this book presents 20 different traits and mechanics, each with their own flavor, so that you can pick the one which best fits the aesthetic of your next encounter.

The effects are balanced for a boss monster around CR 15 - but each trait comes with instructions on how to balance it for other challenge ratings.

There still exist encounter-ending spells such as *forcecage* or *maze*, which do not require a save. LRs did nothing to combat those spells, and neither do the options and tools presented here. But with those tools, you just might make tier 3 and 4 fun again for your players.

These alternatives fall into four categories:

1. COSTLY RESISTANCES

Right now, if a boss uses a LR, it often feels as though nothing of substance was accomplished, especially on a "save or suck" spell. This is because LRs are an isolated resource, that is not used for any other purpose.

Therefore, one solution is to replicate the effects of LRs, but with a cost. This will make the players feel like blowing through resistances actually matters.

2. DESTRUCTIBLE RESISTANCES

Here, the responsibility for ensuring the success of saving throws lies not with the boss itself, but with some external entity, which must be dealt with separately from the boss. Importantly, this means the entity can be dealt with, and when it is, the boss will become vulnerable.

3. MULTI-PHASE ENCOUNTERS

If you plan for an encounter to have multiple phases, an encounter-ending effect will typically only end one phase of the overall encounter. This has the effect of bringing tension back and fight against the "snowball effect" where as the encounter advances, the threat gets lower and lower.

4. PASSIVE THREATS

The reason "add more minions" is the most common piece of advice given to people who clearly want to run solo boss monsters, is that those minions remain threatening while the boss monster is incapacitated.

So, this last category is all about giving the boss monster a selection of fun tools, other than minions, to make it remain threatening while incapacitated.

CREDITS

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1 - COSTLY RESISTANCES

These mechanics tie the use of a legendary resistance with a resource that players will actually care about depleting.

Additionally, the added cost means the monster will sometimes deem it worth it to fail the save rather than to pay up.

Many-limbed bad person. This trait is for creatures who make many attacks per turn: trolls, hydras, mariliths and various aberrations, for example.

It can result in a snowballing fight, which gets less and less threatening as it goes on, but the players will feel the impact of their spells.

MANY-LIMBED BAD PER.

Multiple arms. The many-limbed bad person has 6 arms. Whenever it fails a saving throw, it can choose to lose one of its arms to succeed on the save instead.

Multiattack. The many-limbed bad person makes one attack for each arm it has.

Legendary Bad Person You can see this trait as a "sensible default" if no other mechanic presented in this document is a particularly great fit for the encounter you had in mind.

On a creature with only 1 legendary action, the legendary resilience action should only cost 1 legendary action as well.

LEGENDARY BAD PERSON

Legendary Actions (3/round)

Attack. The legendary bad person makes an attack.

Legendary Resilience (costs 3 actions). The legendary bad person ends one spell or harmful effect currently affecting it.

The legendary bad person can use this action even if it is incapacitated, and must use this action if it is currently charmed.

Smart bad person. Archwizards, liches, hags, sphinxes and other high-end spellcasters often know spells and magical techniques which adventurers don't. This is one of them.

The minimum level of the spell slot that the creature can use for this ability should be set up so the spellcaster has 4 to 6 suitable spell slots. For example, on a CR 6 mage, it should be spell slots of 4th level or above.

SMART BAD PERSON

Arcane Deflection. Whenever the smart bad person makes a saving throw, it can choose to spend a spell slot of 6th level or above to succeed instead.

Spooky bad person. From vampires to demons, adventurers often come across practitioners of the dark arts. This trait shows them at work, countering hostile magic by sacrificing their own life force.

The damage should be equal to one fifth of the creature's max hit points.

SPOOKY BAD PERSON

Blood Sacrifice. Whenever the spooky bad person makes a saving throw, it can choose to take 30 damage to succeed on the saving throw instead.

Time-traveling bad person. This is a trait for bosses who can manipulate fate, luck, or time itself. To observers, they might seem as though they always succeed everything they attempt on the first try - but in reality, toying with the laws of the universe itself takes its toll.

This trait can easily be balanced: increase or decrease the damage taken depending on how often you want the boss to use this trait.

TIME-TRAVELING BAD P.

Instant Replay. Whenever a creature the time-traveling bad person can see makes an attack roll, ability check or saving throw, the time traveling bad person can make the creature re-roll it (no action required).

After using this ability, if the time-traveling bad person uses this ability again before the start of its next turn, it takes 10 force damage for each use beyond the first.

2 - DESTRUCTIBLE RESISTANCES

Adding secondary objectives can help make combat more varied, and more fun. Until those secondary objectives are dealt with, the boss resist all forms of control, but dealing with them usually costs the party a few precious actions.

Charming bad person. From psionically-gifted alien species, great old ones and other eldritch horrors, to simple dryads and bards, mind control is something adventurers often have to deal with.

CHARMING BAD PERSON

Bonus Actions

Charming Presence. Each creature of the charming bad person's choice that can hear it within 120 feet must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed for 1 minute or until the charming bad person or one of its allies does anything harmful to it. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the charming bad persons Charming Presence for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions (3/round)

Invoke Devotion. One creature charmed by the charming bad person within 120 feet of it must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or the charming bad person swaps places with it and transfers any number of spell effects or conditions affecting it it chooses to the creature. The charming bad person can use this legendary action even if it is incapacitated, and must use it if it is charmed.

Tough bad person. Juggernauts, constructs, armored warlords and other adamantine-plated foes use this trait to resist subtle magics in the least subtle way possible.

The damage threshold for the second half of this trait should be equal to the monster's challenge rating.

TOUGH BAD PERSON

Armor Cracks. Whenever the tough bad person makes a saving throw, it treats any result of 14 or lower on the d20 as a 15.

Every time the tough bad person takes 15 or more damage in a single instance, this value is reduced by 1 until the tough bad person finishes a long rest.

Arcane pylon. Also known as the "video game boss pylon", this staple of the arsenal of any self-respecting practitioner of the wizardly arts is a great addition to any archmage's tower, or secret cult's sacrificial chambers.

Especially powerful bosses might have installed more than one pylon in their lair.

ARCANE PYLON

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 50

Speed 0ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities all

Languages —

Senses blindsight 20ft (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

Arcane Bond. The pylon is attuned to one creature it was created to protect, named its ward. While the ward is within 120 feet of the pylon, the pylon adds 5 to saving throws its ward makes. The ward can benefit from more than one pylon's arcane bond.

Forcefield. The pylon generates a magical barrier in a 20-foot-radius sphere around itself. Creatures within the area are resistant to damage caused by creatures outside of it. The ward can activate or de-activate the pylon's Forcefield as a bonus action if it is within 120 feet of it.

Actions

Zap. The creature closest to the pylon is struck by a bolt of lightning. If it is the ward, it gains 18 (4d8) temporary hit points. Otherwise, it must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Reactions

Empower. When the ward hits another creature with an attack while the ward is within 20 feet of the pylon, the pylon can use its reaction to empower the attack. If it does, the attack deals an additional 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

BEAST RIDER

Medium humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 144 (17d8+68)

Speed 30ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +8

Skills animal handling +11

Languages common and up to two other languages

Challenge 8 (8400 XP)

Legendary bond. The beast rider has a mount which it has a lifelong bond with. In combat, the mount acts on the same turn as the beast rider.

The rider can use an action to end one condition, spell or harmful effect affecting its mount, and the mount can use an action to end one condition, spell or harmful effect affecting the rider.

Actions

Multiattack. The rider makes two attacks, each of which it can replace with one of its mount's attacks.

Lance. *Melee weapon attack:* +8 to hit, 10ft reach, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged weapon attack:* +8 to hit, 150/600ft range, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage

Reactions

Mutual protection. Whenever the mount becomes the target of an attack, the rider can use its reaction to make one attack against the attacker. If this attack hits, the triggering attack is made with disadvantage.

The mount can also use this reaction, but uses it when the rider becomes the target of an attack instead.

Mythic Traits

If its mount dies, the rider gains the following trait:

Grieving warrior. Whenever the rider deals damage to the creature who has killed its mount, it deals an additional 9 (2d8) damage of a type the mount was capable of dealing with its attacks.

Beast Rider. Rather than an army of minions, sometimes all it takes is one good friend for a boss to shine. Whether the relationship between the mount and its rider is a symbiotic one, one of magical domination, or a temporary partnership, this dual boss is sure to stand out in the players' minds.

Cursed Reliquary. Sometimes, the solution isn't just to hit things with a sword until they break. Sometimes, it takes a softer touch. This cursed reliquary provides the players with a skill challenge which will require some creativity.

CURSED RELIQUARY

Large, very rare wondrous item (requires attunement by an evil creature)

While attuned to this reliquary, and within 120 feet of it, you succeed on all Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma saving throws.

As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the reliquary can make a DC 25 Religion check to attempt to purify it. On a success, the reliquary is destroyed. The creature takes 18 (4d8) necrotic damage, or half as much on a successful check. On a successful check, the reliquary is destroyed.

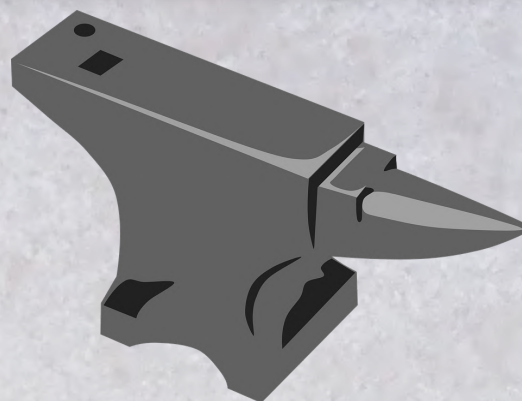
If the *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spells are cast on the reliquary, the DC of ability checks made to purify it is reduced by 5 until the start of the caster's next turn.

Fallible Bad Person. Everyone knows, undead creatures don't like radiant damage, trees don't like fire, and humans don't like being on the pokey end of a sword. This trait lets you represent those weaknesses mechanically, in a slightly different way than vulnerability.

The threshold should be equal to one third of the creature's maximum hit points, and in a damage type which makes sense for that monster.

FALLIBLE BAD PERSON

Weak Point. The fallible bad person succeeds on all saving throws it makes. However, if it takes a total of 80 bludgeoning damage, its armor crumbles to pieces and it loses this trait until it finishes a long rest.



3 - MULTI-PHASE ENCOUNTERS

Dividing encounters into multiple parts is a good way to re-introduce tension and change the stakes. But it also gives you an excuse to end any condition the boss was under, without depriving the players of the thrill of landing those conditions.

Angry bad person. Some boss monsters, from white dragons to demon lords, are particularly brutish. This trait is perfect for those aggressive monsters who lose all semblance of reason when pushed to their last legs.

This trait already takes into account how strong the creature is, and for the most part, it doesn't need any extra work to be balanced for any challenge rating.

ANGRY BAD PERSON

Reckless rage (Mythic trait, recharges after a short or long rest). If the angry bad person is reduced to 0 hit points, it doesn't die or fall unconscious. Instead, it regains all of its hit points, and all ongoing spells, effects and conditions on the angry bad person end immediately.

Additionally, until it finishes a short or long rest, the angry bad person becomes reckless: for the duration, it gains advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls, but attack rolls against it have advantage.

Gross bad person. Hags, trolls, green dragons, and hundreds of similarly pustulent foes inhabit your campaign. This trait makes them exactly as repulsive as you picture them to be.

This trait assumes you have stat blocks for hatchlings of the same species as the boss monster - if you don't, using **swarms of insects** should be a good alternative in most cases.

To balance this trait, you have two options: either change the amount of swarms that are birthed when this creature explodes, or use more powerful

GROSS BAD PERSON

Exploding corpse. When the gross bad person is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes. Each creature within 20 feet of it must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Additionally, 2d4 **swarms of tiny bad persons** appear in unoccupied spaces within 20 feet of the gross bad person.

Self-destructive bad person. Some creatures such as liches or golems are pretty much made of magical energy - and when they are destroyed, this magical energy is released. This is an example of a multi-phase encounter where the second phase is not a combat encounter - but if the boss monster still had a few minions who can slow the party's escape, or hostages for the party to rescue, it might still be a very threatening encounter.

To balance this trait, change the damage and the save DC to match your desired challenge rating. You can also change the damage type to a more commonly resisted one such as fire or lightning, especially if it fits the boss monster's aesthetic better.

SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BAD P.

Self-destruction. When this creature is reduced to 0 hit points, it starts emitting a faint, but quickly increasing magical glow. Two rounds later, on the same initiative count (losing initiative ties), the creature's body violently explodes, and all creatures within 150 feet of it must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 70 (20d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Creatures within the area who benefit from half or three cover make the save with advantage. Creatures within the area benefiting from total cover make the save with advantage, and are resistant to the force damage of this effect.

Well-prepared bad person. The mark of a great antagonist is often having intricate plans spanning years or even centuries. For such cunning villains, having a couple contingencies in place is not a stretch, it is the bare minimum.

You will want to change the threshold depending on the boss' challenge rating. It should be about 10% to 20% of the creature's max hit points.

WELL-PREPARED BAD PER.

Contingency Pact. If the well-prepared bad person is reduced below 30 hit points, as per an infernal contract it had signed with a devil, it is transformed into an aberration, fiend or monstrosity with a challenge rating no greater than its own. As part of this transformation, all ongoing harmful effects and conditions affecting the well-prepared bad person end.

When the well-prepared bad person uses this ability, it cannot use this ability again for 30 days. The well-prepared bad person can turn back into its usual form as an action.

4 - PASSIVE THREATS

If a boss remains can kill your party in its sleep, then you can afford to have the party put it to sleep. These effects work, regardless of the current status of the boss, and ensure the battle will remain tense and fun regardless of what happens during it.

Sparky bad person. Storm giants, djinns, blue dragons and a ton of other monsters use lightning as their element of choice... And the party as their lightning rod of choice.

The spire's hit points should be about 10% of the boss' hit points, and it should deal damage equal to about 1/3rd of that.

SPARKY BAD PERSON

Lightning absorption. Whenever the sparky bad person is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Actions

Lightning spires (recharges 5-6). The sparky bad person throws four large spears made of lightning bolts at points on the ground it can see within 120 feet of itself. Each spear can be destroyed (AC 10, 30 hit points, immune to poison, psychic and lightning damage).

Whenever a creature starts or ends its turn within 20 feet of at least one spear, it takes 10 (3d6) lightning damage.

Stinky bad person. Ghouls, otyughs, catoblepas and more, this game's bestiary is filled with creatures which have never been in a lavatory. This trait weaponizes their stench.

The save DC should be appropriate for the monster's challenge rating, and the damage should be roughly equal to one fifth of the total damage the monster deals in a single round.

STINKY BAD PERSON

Noxious Stench. Whenever another creature starts its turn within 20 feet of the stinky bad person, it must make on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. Creatures within 5 feet of the stinky bad person have disadvantage on the save.

Eldritch Bad Person. Aberrations from outside our reality have an unfortunate to invade the minds of those who come too close to them, send them incomprehensible visions and alter their behavior.

The damage should be about half of the total damage the monster would normally deal in a single round.

ELDRITCH BAD PERSON

Aberrant Connection. When a creature casts a spell requiring concentration at the eldritch bad person, the eldritch bad person sends visions through this connection.

Until the caster loses concentration, at the start of each of the eldritch bad person's turns, each creature within 20 feet of the caster, including the caster, must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw, taking 44 (8d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. The caster has disadvantage on the save.

Cold bad person. Yetis, white dragons, bheur hags, and plenty other mountainous creatures make their lairs in places which are inhospitable to regular people.

The DC should be 3 points lower than regular saving throws at the monster's challenge rating, and the damage should be about one fifth of the total damage the monster deals in a round.

COLD BAD PERSON

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the cold bad person must take a lair action to cause the following effect. It can take this lair action even if it is incapacitated:

Frigid Winds. Every creature within the cold bad person's lair must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 21 (6d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. A creature behind three-quarters cover makes the save with advantage.

Additionally, on a failed save, the creature suffers one level of exhaustion, unless it is immune to cold damage.