

BETTER ZOMBIES



A 5E ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE
CAMPAIGN KIT BY TREKIRO

Zombies are one of the most popular subgenres of horror, in all forms of media. But 5e's zombies are lacking - instead of an apocalyptic threat, they are mere tools. This small supplement aims to give you a campaign toolkit for running fun zombie romps in 5e.

The zombies presented in this supplement are inspired by video game zombies: they have more variety, and more interesting gameplay opportunities than if they had been inspired by movie zombies. This supplement is the result of a video on my Youtube channel, [Game Changer](#).

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CREDITS

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IMPROVED ZOMBIE TEMPLATE

The 5e system already includes a zombie template, but this one includes a random table of mutations so you can make your zombies as weird and horrific as possible.

Applying the template. Any creature other than a construct or undead may use this template. When it does, the creature becomes an undead. Its ability score bonuses are modified by the specified values, and it gains all of the traits & actions of the stat block presented below.

ZOMBIE TEMPLATE

Undead, same size as the original creature, unaligned

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	-2	+3	-4	+0	-3

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., unless the creature already had a higher range of darkvision

Languages none

Challenge +1

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Random Mutations. The zombie experiences any number of mutations from the Zombie Mutations table. For each mutation it has, the zombie's challenge rating increases by 1.

1d12 Zombie Mutation

1 **Bone Protrusions.** The zombie's Armor Class is increased by 5.

2 **Pulsating Pustules.** When the zombie takes damage of any type but psychic, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) poison damage.

3 **Overgrown.** The zombie's size increases by 1 category. It adds an extra 3 (1d6) to the result of all Strength-based ability checks and Saving Throws, and to the attack and damage rolls of its melee weapon attacks. Additionally, its maximum hit points are increased by 15. The zombie can experience this mutation multiple times.

4 **Eye Stalks.** The zombie has +10 to its Passive Perception, has Truesight and Blindsight up to 60 feet, and cannot be blinded.

5 **Chameleon Skin.** As a bonus action, the zombie can become Invisible. It remains invisible until it takes damage.

6 **Gills.** The zombie has a swimming speed of 60 feet.

7 **Psionic Brain.** The zombie can communicate telepathically with other zombies within 120 feet of it.

8 **Bladed Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* STR+PB to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10+STR slashing damage.

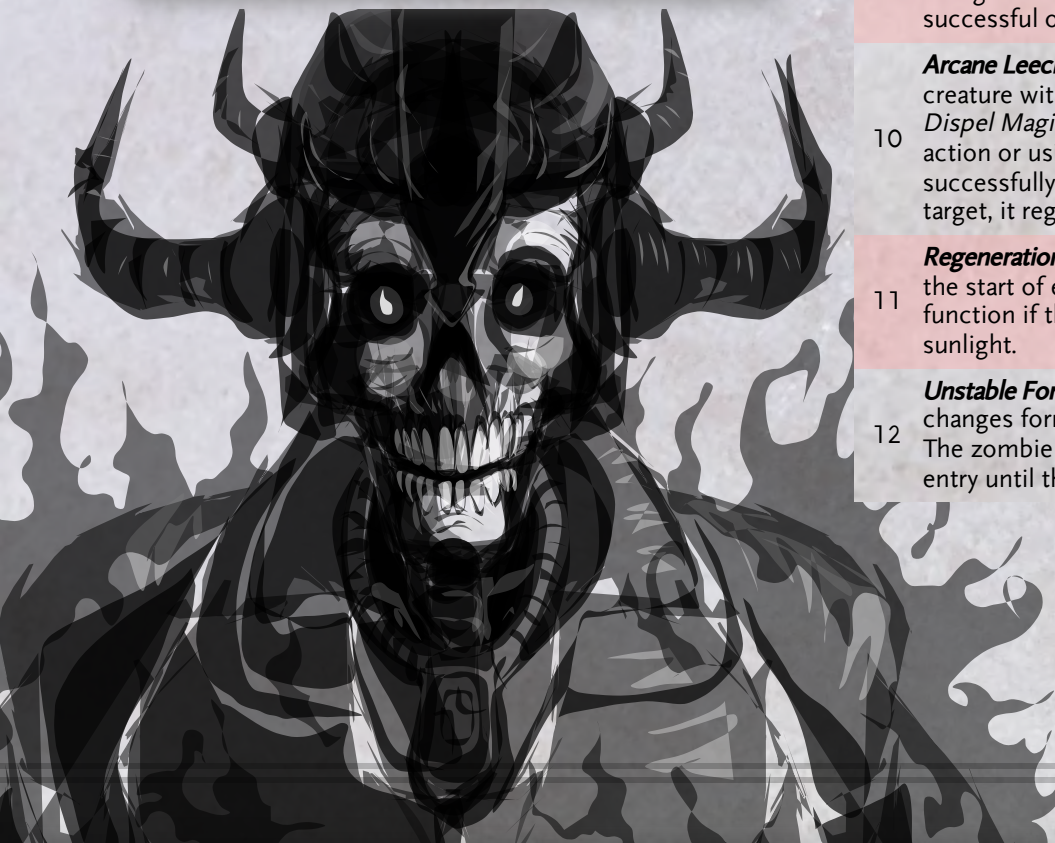
9 The zombie can make this attack without using an action if it uses its action to make at least one Melee Weapon Attack. The zombie can experience this mutation multiple times.

10 **Bone Quills (recharges 5-6).** The zombie throws hundreds of razor-sharp quills in a 30-foot cone. Each creature within area must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw, taking a number of d6s of piercing damage equal to the zombie's challenge rating on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

11 **Arcane Leech.** Whenever the zombie hits another creature with a Melee Weapon Attack, it casts *Dispel Magic* on the creature without spending an action or using spell components. If it has successfully ended a spell or magical effect on the target, it regains 14 (4d6) hit points.

12 **Regeneration.** The zombie regains 10 hit points at the start of each of its turns. This trait doesn't function if the zombie starts its turn in direct sunlight.

Unstable Form. As a bonus action, the zombie changes forms. Roll on the Zombie Mutation table. The zombie gains the benefits of the corresponding entry until the start of its next turn.



ZOMBIE STAT BLOCKS

Zombies evolve when they are exposed to the elements. The following stat blocks represent the different evolutions a zombie might go through.

Runner. When a humanoid first turns into a zombie, they turn into a Runner. This is what makes the first few days of the infection especially dangerous: society is entirely overwhelmed when these

Shambler. If a runner spends at least 3 months outdoors without feeding, it turns into a slower, and less dangerous shambler. A couple months after the start of the zombie outbreak, most zombies outside of buildings will have become shamblers - but in large numbers, they can still represent a threat.

Stalker. If a runner spends at least 3 months without being exposed to sunlight, it turns into a stalker. The stalker likes to hide in dark corners and ambush its victims, and often hunts in small packs. At night, they might emerge from the buildings to hunt the living out in the streets.

Bloater. If a runner or shambler spends at least three months in an especially damp and wet environment, it turns into a bloater. The bloater can project poisonous bile to cover the floor, which can be especially dangerous to a character who is being grappled by other zombies. Bloaters also explode when killed, so characters should avoid being near them.

Howler. If a runner or a shambler devours a corpse which was coated with a bloater's bile, it turns into a howler. The screech of a Howler attracts nearby infested, so they must be dealt with stealthily. Luckily, they make a distinctive gargling noise, which makes them easy to spot.

Slurper. If a shambler manages to kill and devour a humanoid despite its relative weakness, it regains some of its past strength and turns into a slurper. A slurper's tongue carries a powerful numbing venom, and it is strong enough to pull a character into a nearby horde of zombies.

Juggernaut. When any zombie manages to turn at least 20 humanoids into zombies, it grows from the life energy of its victims and turns into a juggernaut. A juggernaut might also appear if a zombie absorbs energy from other phenomena, such as drinking a potion of health, or being struck by lightning.

Juggernauts are the most powerful zombies: they are extremely difficult to destroy, and their blows can send characters flying into hordes of smaller zombies.

NOTE: MUTATIONS ON REGULAR ZOMBIES

If you want to add even more variety to your encounters, or increase the difficulty, you can use the mutations from the zombie template on these zombie stat blocks. For each mutation a zombie has, its challenge rating increases by 1.

It is recommended not to use these mutations on swarms.



RUNNER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4

Speed 30ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The runner makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the zombie was already grappling this creature, it knocks it prone instead.

Bonus Actions

Aggressive. The zombie moves up to its speed towards a hostile creature it can see.

SWARM RULES

Instead of repeating the same rules on every swarm's stat block, the stat blocks presented in this document all obey the following general rules:

Movement. A swarm can occupy another creature's space, and vice versa, but the swarm's space is considered difficult terrain for other creatures. Additionally, a swarm can move through an opening large enough for the creatures making up the swarm to fit through.

Merging. As an action, a swarm of the same kind, or a creature of the same kind as those making up the swarm the swarm, can merge with the swarm. The swarm regains hit points equal to the merged creature's current hit points.

Splitting. As an action, the swarm can split. It must spend either at least one fourth of its maximum hit point, to create a second swarm of the same kind with that amount of hit point, or it must spend the maximum hit points of one or more of the creatures making up the swarm, to create those creatures.

RUNNER HORDE

Gargantuan Swarm of Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 100

Speed 30ft, climb 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Turn vulnerability. The horde has disadvantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead. Its challenge rating is considered to be 1/4 for such effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The horde makes two attacks against each creature within its space.

Pile up. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target within the swarm's space. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). If it was already grappled, it is knocked prone.

If the swarm has less than half its hit points, the attack deals half the damage.

Bonus Actions

Aggressive. The horde moves up to its movement speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

SHAMBLER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 4

Speed 20ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Clumsy. Whenever the shambler attempts to climb an object more than 4 feet tall, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength check, or fall prone.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the zombie was already grappling this creature, it knocks it prone instead.

NOTE: WHY HORDES HAVE A CLIMBING SPEED

Hordes can climb even smooth walls, by having zombies walk on top of one another, and forming a ladder of flesh. However, runners are much better at this than shamblers.

SHAMBLER HORDE

Gargantuan Swarm of Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 100

Speed 20ft, climb 10ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Turn vulnerability. The horde has disadvantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead. Its challenge rating is considered to be 1/8 for such effects.

Clumsy. Whenever the horde attempts to climb an object more than 4 feet tall, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength check, or fall prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The horde makes one attack against each creature within its space.

Pile up. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target within the swarm's space. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). If it was already grappled, it is knocked prone.

If the swarm has less than half its hit points, the attack deals half the damage.

STALKER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 34 (5d8+15)

Speed 30ft, climb 30ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Stalker's Pounce. The stalker can jump horizontally and vertically up to its speed. If it hits a creature with a melee attack while jumping, it deals an additional 1d6 damage for each 10 feet it has traveled, takes no damage from falling, and knocks the creature prone.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the zombie was already grappling this creature, it knocks it prone instead.

BLOATER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 34 (5d8+15)

Speed 20ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Burst. When the bloater is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes, sending bile and bone-shrapnel in all directions. Each creature within 15 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Actions

Hurl Bile (recharges 5-6). Poisonous bile covers a 10-foot-radius circle centered on a point on the ground within 30 feet of the bloater. Whenever a creature starts its turn in the area, it takes 5 (1d10) poison damage. The bile spreads around corners, and dissipates after 1 minute.

Self-destruct. The bloater reduces itself to 0 hit points.

HOWLER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 34 (5d8+15)

Speed 20ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Gurgling Cough. The howler automatically fails any Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the zombie was already grappling this creature, it knocks it prone instead.

Screech (recharges 5-6). The howler screams loudly. All creatures within 300 feet hear it. After one minute, at least one zombie horde arrives at the howler's location.

JUGGERNAUT

Large Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 160

Speed 40ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Siege Monster. The juggernaut deals double damage to objects and structures.

Superior Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

If the damage was radiant or from a critical hit, the DC is 10 + the damage taken instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The juggernaut makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8+5) bludgeoning damage, and the creature is pushed up to 15 feet away. If it is pushed into a wall or into another creature, it takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage, and is knocked prone.

SLURPER

Medium Undead, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 34 (5d8+15)

Speed 20ft, climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Triple Tongue. The slurper has up to 3 tongues. Each tongue can be attacked (AC 16, 10 hit points). Destroying a tongue deals no damage to the slurper, which grows a replacement tongue when it finishes a short or long rest.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the zombie was already grappling this creature, it knocks it prone instead.

Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) poison damage. Additionally, the creature is grappled (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the creature is poisoned, and the slurper cannot use the same tongue on another target.

Bonus Actions

Reel. The slurper pulls one creature grappled by it by up to 20 feet toward it.

RUNNING A ZOMBIE CAMPAIGN

The following are a list of optional tips and tools for Game Masters, to help you run a fun zombie campaign. Each is accompanied by an explanation of what kind of experience they create, so you can more easily pick the ones that will be right for your table.

INFECTION RULES

You have a couple options for how the process of creating new zombies work.

1. THE PLAYER CHARACTERS ARE IMMUNE

A small proportion of the people are immune to the zombie infection, and the player characters happen to be part of that lucky group. This method keeps things simple, as you don't introduce any new rules to the game.

2. EVERYONE WHO DIES, TURNS

This method is also simple, but if you use it, there cannot realistically be any large survivor camps in the setting: those would be prone to accidentally spawning zombies within their walls.

This can also be used to portray zombies as magical. Maybe they were created by a powerful demon, for example.

Zombie Curse Rules. Whenever a creature other than an Undead or Construct dies, it rises as a zombie at the end of its next turn.

2. THE PLAYERS AREN'T IMMUNE

This method makes the zombies especially deadly, and should be used with caution. It will promote a more stealth-based approach to the game. You should avoid too many surprise attacks against your players while using it: let them be the ones who come up with a plan instead.

Nevertheless, the rule is set up so a single unlucky roll will not immediately end a player character's story.

Zombie Bite Rules. When a zombie hits a creature with a melee attack, and that creature is both prone, and grappled by the zombie, the creature gets bitten.

A creature who is bitten receives a disease and is poisoned. After 1d4 hours, it turns into a runner.

Optionally, you can also use the following rule in combination with this one. This creates plot hooks and gives player characters a slightly higher chance at survival.

Zombie Cure Rules. A cure to the zombie disease can be crafted from the heart of a Zombie Juggernaut. Crafting the cure takes 30 minutes, and using it takes an action.

SURVIVAL RULES

The following rules recommendations will help your campaign portray survival-type gameplay.

1. TRACKING RATIONS & AMMUNITION

While tracking rations & ammunition in a normal 5e campaign can clash against the "fantasy superhero" themes of 5e, in a survival-horror zombie campaign, it can be the entire focus of the story.

2. LONGER RESTS

This rule makes it impossible for the player characters to rely exclusively on spells like *goodberry* or *create food & water*, as well as class features such as the ranger's *natural explorer*, for the party's food & water needs.

They will have to go out of their way to hunt, forage, & scavenge, in a zombie-infested world.

Longer rests. Short rests take 8 hours, during which characters must sleep for at least 6 hours. Long rests take 7 days, during which a character can perform downtime activities.

3. NO VENDORS

A good way to represent a world of scarcity is to remove vendors for common objects such as food and ammunition.

In a world where food is more valuable than gold, people would probably turn to trade instead of using currency as usual.

4. "EPIC 6"

"Epic 6" is a style of campaign where the maximum level the player characters can reach is 6, instead of 20. This keeps low CR enemies relevant throughout the story, encourages players to come up with solutions instead of just ignoring their problems until the next time they gain a level, and helps portray a world of low magic.

Optionally, NPCs may also follow this rule, in which case, there shouldn't be any humanoid NPCs above CR 3.



SIEGE EQUIPMENT

Sometimes, you go into zombie-infested ruins. Sometimes, it's the zombies that come to you. These optional rules will help you run a siege-type encounter.

Siege rules. Players have 10 to 15 "build points" which they must use to build siege defenses. The GM might award more points for side objectives.

Siege defenses are objects which can be destroyed (AC 10, 25 hit points). Swarms are vulnerable to damage dealt by siege defenses.

Barbwire (1pt). The barbwire covers a square on the ground up to 10 feet on a side. It is considered difficult terrain, and when a creature moves into or within the area, it takes 5 points of slashing damage for every 5 feet it travels.

Oil Cauldron (1pt, 1 use). A creature can topple the cauldron as an action to pour burning oil onto a 10-foot-square area directly below it. Creatures within the area are doused in burning oil.

A creature doused in burning oil takes 10 fire damage at the start of each of its turns, and deals an extra 5 fire damage with melee attacks.

A creature doused in burning oil can go prone and use all of its movement as an action, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.

Pit Trap (1pt). This is a cube-shaped hole, up to 10 feet on a side, that was carved into the ground or the floor. Its top is covered, and a creature with less than 13 passive Perception fails to see it before walking into the trap.

At the bottom of the pit are wooden spikes. A creature who falls into the pit takes 14 (4d6) piercing damage, and is grappled (escape DC 15).

Plank Bridge (1pt). This bridge made of planks can cover a gap up to 15 feet long. If a large or larger creature, or at least 3 medium creatures are standing on it, the bridge breaks.

Barricade (1pt). This barricade is 10 feet tall and up to 30 feet long. It can be a wooden fence, planks nailed to a window, or sacs of grain, for example.

When attacking a creature on the other side of the barricade, unless you are within 5 feet of the barricade, the creature has three-quarter cover from you (+5 to its AC).

Ballista (3pt). As an action, a creature can fire the ballista. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, Range 120/480 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) piercing damage

Powder Keg (3 pt). If the keg takes fire damage, it explodes, producing the effects of a *fireball* spell (save DC 15) centered on itself.

Repair Kit (1pt, 3 uses). As an action, a creature can pick up some materials and tools from this kit. While carrying these materials, the creature can use an action to repair another piece of siege equipment that was destroyed. A creature can only carry one use worth of repair materials at once.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The following are ideas for 5e adventures that make full use of the zombie apocalypse premise:

Rescuing a scav. During a chase with rival scavengers, one of your friends fell into a collapsing roof, into a zombie-infested spa resort. You must find and rescue him, before your rivals get to him and find out your camp's location.

Mouths to feed. You've been hiding on a rooftop in the middle of a large city. At this point, your supplies are running low, and it's clear help isn't coming. You need to find a solution before the winter comes.

The real monsters. You were captured by some doomsday cultists who worship the zombies. There, you met a few other prisoners who were more interested in planning an escape than in becoming ritual sacrifices.

Ground Zero. Next on the list of buildings you wanted to scavenge for supplies was an archmage's tower. But what you will find out there is that the archmage had a hand, by accident, in the creation of the zombies.

Road Trip. You carry the key to the creation of a cure. You just need to track down the one person who can craft it. Last you heard, they were on the other side of the country - shouldn't be too hard, there should be some teleportation circles nearby, right?

Old friends. You have been in conflict with a rival gang of survivors... But you've just found out one of their members is an old friend from before the zombie apocalypse started. Will you be able to reconcile? Or will you have to betray the people who have been keeping you safe?

The Couriers. You couldn't survive on just the rations the military was giving you, so you've started taking on dirty jobs for the local thieves' guild.. Including "shipping". You must venture into a zombie-infested wasteland to ship your contraband to different parts of the country.

The big scoop. Only one city has fallen to the zombies. You work for a bardic college, and they want to make sure other cities are prepared in case an outbreak happens somewhere else... So they've sent you to investigate the origin of the infection. What secrets will you uncover?

