

# All About Clerics

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Most **D&D** players feel vulnerable, if not downright naked, without a cleric in the group. A cleric's spells and class features can literally make the difference between life and death for a party. Unfortunately, the rules governing a cleric's extensive array of spells and class abilities can cause confusion when players and DMs start exploring the limits of the cleric's powers. We'll try to clear some of that up.

## Alignment

Most clerics are associated with a deity. When a cleric has a patron deity, his alignment must be the same as the deity's or within one step of his deity's alignment on either the lawful-chaotic axis or the good-evil axis, but not both. A cleric cannot be neutral (that is, neutral on both the law-chaos and the good-evil axis) unless his deity also is neutral. The table below shows the possibilities:

Deity Alignment	Possible Cleric Alignments
Lawful Good	Lawful Good Lawful Neutral Neutral Good
Neutral Good	Neutral Good Lawful Good Chaotic Good
Chaotic Good	Chaotic Good Neutral Good Chaotic Neutral
Lawful Neutral	Lawful Neutral Lawful Good Lawful Evil
Neutral	Neutral Neutral Good Lawful Neutral Chaotic Neutral Neutral Evil
Chaotic Neutral	Chaotic Neutral Chaotic Good Chaotic Evil
Lawful Evil	Lawful Evil Lawful Neutral Neutral Evil
Neutral Evil	Neutral Evil Lawful Evil Chaotic Evil
Chaotic Evil	Chaotic Evil Chaotic Neutral Neutral Evil

A cleric could have no deity at all (see page 32 in the *Player's Handbook*). A cleric with no deity can have any alignment, but the cleric's choice of alignment can affect which clerical **domains** the cleric can choose (see the next section).

A cleric of a chaotic, evil, good, or lawful deity has a particularly powerful aura corresponding to the deity's alignment (see the *detect evil* spell description for details), no matter what the cleric's alignment actually is. For example, a neutral good cleric of a lawful good deity has auras of law and good.

A cleric without a deity still has an alignment aura if he chooses the **Chaos, Evil, Good, or Lawful** domains. The aura matches the domain (or domains).

## Cleric Spells

In most people's minds, the cleric is primarily a spellcaster, and a cleric's spells can prove powerful indeed. The cleric class description on page 32 in the *Player's Handbook* covers the cleric's spellcasting ability in some detail. The text covering divine spells on pages 179-180 provides additional information. Here's an overview of the basics:

- A cleric casts **divine spells**.

Divine spells are not subject to arcane **spell failure** chances from armor and shields. Certain divine spells might have different material or focus components than the arcane versions of the same spells. See page 174 in the *Player's Handbook* for details. Also see Rules of the Game, Reading Spell Descriptions.

The number of spells a cleric can use each day is shown on Table 3-6 in the *Player's Handbook*.

- **Wisdom** governs a cleric's spells.

To prepare or cast a spell, a cleric must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. For example, a cleric must have a Wisdom score of at least 11 to prepare or cast a 1st-level spell and must have a Wisdom score of at least 13 to prepare or cast a 3rd-level spell. A cleric with a Wisdom score of 9 or less cannot prepare or cast any spells at all.

If a cleric suffers a Wisdom reduction after preparing spells for a day (from a Wisdom-damaging attack, for example) the cleric may be unable to cast a prepared spell. The spell becomes available to cast again if the cleric recovers the lost Wisdom. Even if the Wisdom loss turns out to be permanent, the cleric eventually can make use of the **spell slot** that contains the unusable spell (see the notes on spell preparation in Part Two on slots for details).

When a cleric casts a spell, the cleric's Wisdom score determines the spell's save **Difficulty Class** (if the spell allows a **save** at all). The DC is 10 + **spell level** + the cleric's Wisdom **modifier** at the time the cleric casts the spell. A reduction in a cleric's Wisdom score (even a temporary one) reduces the save DCs for the cleric's spells if that reduction is sufficient to lower the cleric's Wisdom modifier (assuming that the cleric can still cast the spell -- see the previous section). An increase in a cleric's Wisdom score (even a temporary one) increases the save DCs for the cleric's spells if that increase is sufficient to raise the cleric's Wisdom modifier.

A cleric's Wisdom score might also give him one or more bonus spells each day, as shown on Table 1-1 in the *Player's Handbook* and explained in the accompanying text.

- Most of a cleric's spells must be prepared in advance.

A cleric prepares spells through prayer and meditation. A cleric doesn't need to use spellbooks or other aids to prepare spells. Part Two examines clerical spell preparation in detail.

- Clerics have a limited ability to cast some spells spontaneously.

**Spontaneous casting** is the ability to take any prepared spell and cast it as another spell of the same or lower level. A cleric taps into the stored spell's energy and channels it into another spell. When you use a prepared spell to spontaneously cast another spell, you use up the prepared spell.

A good cleric (or a neutral cleric of a good deity) can spontaneously cast **cure spells**, and a *cure* spell is any spell with "cure" in its name, such as *cure light wounds*.

An evil cleric (or a neutral cleric of an evil deity) can spontaneously cast **inflict spells**, and an *inflict* spell is any spell with "inflict" in its name, such as *inflict light wounds*.

A cleric who is neither good nor evil and whose deity is neither good nor evil can convert spells to either *cure* spells or *inflict* spells (player's choice). Once the player makes this choice, it cannot be reversed. This choice also determines whether the cleric **turns** or **commands** undead (see Part Three).

- A cleric can cast domain spells.

A cleric receives an extra spell slot each day for each spell level he can cast.

A cleric chooses two domains from among those belonging to his deity. As noted earlier, a cleric doesn't always have to have a deity. A cleric without a deity simply chooses two domains. In any case, a cleric can select an alignment domain (Chaos, Evil, Good, or Law) only if his alignment matches that domain. For example, a cleric can choose the Law domain only if his alignment has a lawful component. This is true even if the cleric is dedicated to a lawful deity.

A domain gives the cleric access to a domain spell at each spell level he can cast, from 1st on up (as well as a **granted power**, see Part Three). This gives the cleric access to two domain spells at a given spell level, and a cleric prepares one or the other each day in his domain spell slot. If a domain spell is not on the cleric spell list, a cleric can prepare it only in his domain spell slot.

- A cleric's alignment limits the spells he can use.

A cleric can't cast spells of an alignment opposed to his own or his deity's (if he has one). A spell has an alignment if it has an alignment descriptor (chaos, evil, good, and law). See page 174 of the *Player's Handbook* and Rules of the Game, Reading Spell Descriptions. For example, a neutral good cleric of a lawful good deity cannot use spells with the chaos or evil descriptors.

## Clerics Preparing Spells

As noted last week, clerics must prepare spells ahead of time (except for **spontaneous** spells). Pages 179-180 in the *Player's Handbook* give the details, but arguments about how and when clerics prepare their spells abound. Here are the basics, along with a few notes to help clarify things.

- Clerics prepare spells once a day.

The cleric's deity may specify a time each day for the cleric to cast spells. If the cleric has no deity (or her deity doesn't specify a time), the cleric chooses one time each day for spell preparation. Dawn, dusk, noon, and midnight are common choices. Some deities specify several different times for spell preparation. If so, the cleric chooses one time from among those the deity makes available and must stick with the choice thereafter.

Clerics have some flexibility when it comes to preparing spells. The rules say that if something prevents the cleric from preparing spells at the usual time, the cleric can wait until a suitable opportunity for spell preparation comes. The rules don't specify exactly what constitutes being prevented from preparing spells, but here are a few thoughts on the matter.

Clerics require the same environment for spell preparation that **wizards** need; that is, enough peace, quiet, and comfort to allow for proper concentration. Overt distractions such as exposure to inclement weather, injury (or even a credible risk of injury, such as foes attacking), excessive noise, and the like interfere with concentration. If the proper environment isn't available, or if foes are on hand to harass the cleric, that constitutes being prevented. If, however, the proper environment is available at the usual preparation time and the cleric simply decides to skip spell preparation in favor of some other activity, the cleric hasn't been prevented from preparing spells and must wait until the next day to prepare spells. During the course of a campaign, there might be times when a cleric misses an opportunity to prepare spells and it won't be clear if the cleric was truly prevented from doing so. In such cases, it's up to the DM to decide if the cleric could reasonably have found the proper environment for spell preparation. If the DM decides the cleric skipped spell preparation voluntarily, the cleric should have to wait until the next day to prepare spells. In some cases, the DM might decide to allow the cleric to delay spell preparation if the cleric skips her usual spell preparation time to pursue some goal that furthers her deity's interests or the interests of the cleric's ethos.

Even if the cleric misses her spell preparation involuntarily, the cleric still must stop and prepare spells just as soon as the proper spell preparation environment becomes available. If the cleric skips the new opportunity, she still must wait until her usual spell preparation time the next day.

When a cleric prepares spells for the day, she can choose to change any spells she has left over from the previous day, even if a reduction in **Wisdom** has made those spells unavailable for casting (see Part One).

- Clerics don't require rest prior to preparing spells.

A cleric doesn't have to be rested before preparing spells. A cleric does have to be able to concentrate to prepare spells, however, as noted in the previous section.

- Clerics are subject to the recent casting limit rule.

When preparing spells for the day, any spell the cleric has cast during the previous 8 hours counts against the number of spells the cleric can prepare (see page 180 in the *Player's Handbook*).

This rule means that even though clerics don't require rest before spell preparation, they do best when they prepare spells at the beginning of their daily activities. For example, if the cleric prepares spells at dusk, she'd do well to arrange to start her day at dusk.

- Clerics don't have to prepare all their spells for the day at once.

When a cleric prepares spells for the day, the cleric has the option to leave some **spell slots** open, just as a wizard does. Later in the day, the cleric can stop and repeat her spell preparation to place spells in the empty slots.

In effect, the cleric stops, prays, and meditates at the usual time, and those actions make the cleric's spell slots available for the day. The cleric can fill those slots immediately or she can wait until later. See page 178 in the *Player's Handbook* for details on repeating the spell preparation.

- Clerics don't use spellbooks or personal spell lists.

Clerics choose spells to prepare from the cleric spell list when filling their regular spell slots. Clerics fill their **domain** spell slots from their domain spell lists. If a spell is on both the cleric spell list and at least one of the cleric's domain lists, the clerics can prepare the spell as either a regular spell or as a domain spell.

- A cleric's spell slot can hold a spell of its level or of a lower level.

A cleric can prepare a lower-level spell in a higher-level slot, just as any other spellcaster can. If the cleric's **Wisdom** score won't allow her to prepare spells in her higher-level slots, she still can use those slots for lower-level slots. For example, a 9th-level cleric has 4th-level spell slots available. If the cleric has a **Wisdom** score of only 13, however, she can prepare and cast up to 3rd-level spells only. She can prepare spells of 3rd level or lower in her otherwise unusable 4th-level spell slots. Although the text on page 32 in the *Player's Handbook* seems to imply that a domain spell slot can

hold a spell of its own level only, there's no good reason to bar a cleric from preparing a lower-level spell from one of her domains for that slot.

Like other spellcasters, clerics also can prepare spells using metamagic feats, which make those spells use higher-level spell slots. To prepare or cast a spell modified with most metamagic feats, the cleric's Wisdom score must be at least equal to 10 + the spell's unmodified level. For example, a cleric with a Wisdom score of 14 can use a 5th-level spell slot to prepare a 4th-level spell modified with the Enlarge Spell metamagic feat (which makes the spell use a slot one level higher than normal). The Heighten Spell metamagic feat actually raises the spell's level, as noted in the **D&D FAQ**. To prepare or cast a spell modified with the Heighten Spell feat, the cleric's Wisdom score must be equal to 10 + the spell's modified level.

## Spontaneous Spells

As noted in Part One, a cleric doesn't need to prepare a spontaneous spell in advance. Instead, the cleric merely substitutes the spontaneous spell for a previously prepared spell of the same or higher level. For example, if a cleric want to spontaneously cast a *cure moderate wounds* spell (a 2nd-level spell), he must give up a prepared spell of 2nd-level or higher to do so.

It's reasonable to allow a cleric to use a **spell slot** that has been left empty after daily spell preparation and ready to be filled with a spell (see Part Two) for a spontaneous spell; however, the rules don't say you can do that.

The cleric doesn't have to do anything special to cast a spontaneous spell. He simply uses whatever casting time is required for the spell he is actually casting. For example, he uses one **standard action** to cast a spontaneous *cure light wounds* spell, no matter what the **casting time** for whatever prepared spell the *cure light wounds* replaces happens to be.

You can apply any metamagic feat the cleric knows to a spontaneous spell. To do so, you must use a spell slot of the spell's modified level. For example, a maximized spontaneous *cure light wounds* spell requires a 4th-level spell slot. Casting a spontaneous spell modified with metamagic is a **full-round action** if the modified spell had a casting time of 1 standard action or less. If the modified spell has a casting time longer than 1 standard action, the modified spell takes an extra full-round action to cast (see page 88 in the *Player's Handbook*). Because of the minimum casting time of a full-round action, it's a waste to try to quicken a spontaneous spell.

## Domains and Domain Powers

As noted in Part One, a cleric chooses two domains from the list of domains his deity makes available. If the cleric has no deity, the cleric simply chooses any two domains available in the campaign. DMs should feel free to limit the cleric's choices. Remember that you cannot choose one of the alignment domains (Chaos, Evil, Good, and Law) unless the cleric has the corresponding alignment. When you choose a domain, all the spells in that domain become part of the cleric's class spell list for purposes of using **spell completion** and **spell trigger** magic items (see Rules of the Game, Using Magic Items).

Treat domain powers as class features. Any level-based variables the power has equal his cleric level. If he becomes an ex-cleric (see page 33 in the *Player's Handbook*), he loses his domain powers. When a domain gives a cleric a caster level increase, he doesn't gain any extra spellcasting abilities. Instead, all level-based variables for the affected spells increase according to his increased caster level. For example, if you have a 3rd-level cleric with the **Healing domain** and he casts a *cure light wounds* spell, he will heal 1d8+4 points of damage with the spell because his caster level is effectively 4th. His caster level increase affects all the level-based variables the spell has, including range, damage, size of area, and number of targets; exactly which aspects of the spell are affected depends on the spell. See the spell's description for details. If the spell can be **dispelled**, use the cleric's increased **caster level** to set the **DC** for any caster level checks another character makes to dispel the spell.

When a domain gives the cleric an extra **class skill**, you effectively add the listed skill to the cleric class skill list. When you spend skill points from the cleric class, you can buy the listed skill as a class skill (at one rank

per point spent). Having a skill as a class skill through a domain doesn't help you when spending skill points from any other class that you might have.

When a domain gives the cleric a special turning ability (such as the ability to affect certain **elemental** creatures), his daily uses of that ability are in addition to any **undead** turning he can use for the day. He can use the Extra Turning feat to gain extra uses of both his special turning ability and his ability to affect undead (see the Extra Turning feat description). For example, if you have a cleric with a **Charisma** score of 14 and the **Air domain**, he can effect undead five times a day (3 + his Charisma modifier of +2) and he can affect earth or air creatures five times a day. If he takes the Extra Turning feat, he can affect undead nine times a day and he can affect earth or air creatures nine times a day. The greater turning ability from the **Sun domain** isn't an extra turning attempt (it simply changes how the cleric's undead turning ability works), and it's not subject to the Extra Turning feat.

## Turning Undead

Good clerics (or neutral clerics who have chosen to spontaneously cast *cure* spells) have the ability to turn undead. Pages 159-169 in the *Player's Handbook* cover undead turning in considerable detail. Here are some additional notes. The material in this section applies equally to special turning abilities from domain abilities (see previous section).

A cleric turns undead as a standard action that doesn't provoke an **attack of opportunity**. Doing so requires him to present his holy symbol. The rules don't specify exactly what that entails. Common sense suggests that presenting his holy symbol involves holding the symbol in his hand (or what passes for a hand) and holding it up in plain sight (or what would pass for plain sight if anyone could see him; but see the **D&D FAQ** for the question regarding *greater invisibility* and turning).

Turning works something like a spell with an area (he doesn't need to see the undead he affects, but he needs line of effect to them) and something like a spell that affects multiple targets (he affects undead with a limited number of Hit Dice, with the undead closest to him affected first). You may find it helpful to treat a turning attempt as a 60-foot burst to some extent, though be wary about how far you take the similarities since substantial differences do exist (see the glossary or Rules of the Game, Reading Spell Descriptions, also see the **D&D FAQ** for a question about bursts and turning). As with any burst, the center can be any grid intersection in the space he occupies. Only undead that are in the burst at the time he makes the turning attempt are affected. He affects only as many undead as his turning check and turning damage rolls allow. As noted earlier, undead closest to the cleric are affected first. If he doesn't have enough **Hit Dice** available to affect a creature, there's no effect, and he cannot use those dice to affect another, more distant undead creature that's inside the burst.

According to the rules, evil clerics (or neutral clerics who have chosen to spontaneously use **inflict spells**) have the ability to **rebuke** or **command** undead. They also can use rebuke attempts to dispel a turning effect on an undead creature. The rules don't say so, but there's no reason a good cleric can't dispel an evil cleric's rebuke effect on an undead or dispel an evil cleric's control over an undead creature by making a successful turn attempt against that creature, just as noted on page 159 of the *Player's Handbook*.