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## Lawful Evil

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*"Peace through tyranny."*

— **Megatron**, *Transformers*

The *Dungeons & Dragons* Character Alignment system originally defined characters' moral dispositions only on a Law/Chaos axis, with Law seen as usually involving moral goodness and Chaos evil. Eventually, Good/Evil was introduced as a separate parameter. One reason for this was the slightly odd but not all that rare case of characters who are clearly evil, but nevertheless organised, consistent, rule-abiding, and/or maybe even **trustworthy and reasonable in their own limited way** — in other words, Lawful Evil.



Bringing order to the galaxy. Even if we have to choke the shit out of it.

A Lawful Evil character is an evil character who either tries to impose or uphold a lawful system on others without regard for their wishes, and/or adheres to a particular code. They believe in order, but mostly because they believe it is the best way of realizing their evil wishes. They will obey the letter of the law, but not the spirit, and are usually very careful about giving their word. However, there is also the **Knight Templar** variant, who believes their rules actually make them the good guy — when they and their rules have in truth ended up at the lower end of the slippery slope to evil and tyranny.

Though Lawful Evil characters are often found in charge, these characters also make good henchmen or [mooks](#). Though they lack any moral scruples that may impair their work, a cautious villain will find they respond well to concepts like 'loyalty', 'duty', and 'honour'. The caution, however, should be remembered, as these characters also respond poorly to [Bad Bosses](#) and [Dirty Cowards](#)<sup>*note*</sup>, as well as simple incompetence that could lead them to deciding to either find a more worthy master, or take over 'for the good of the cause'.

Lawful Evil comes in four flavors:

- Type 1 is those who believe in *civic* order, and are the villains who believe either in keeping order and control at *all costs*, or that it's much easier to become ruler of the world by exploiting the existing system than by tearing it down and starting anew. Maybe they like to rule with an iron fist, or publicly playing by rules gives them enough [Good Publicity](#) to get away with their evil schemes. If the villain is [supreme ruler of their realm](#), then they are probably either Lawful Evil or [The Caligula](#). This is the canonical alignment of devils in [Dungeons & Dragons](#). Lawful Evil can be the most dangerous alignment because [it represents intentional, methodical and frequently successful evil](#). More than likely megalomaniacal sorts out to "restore/maintain order" by — you guessed it — [Taking Over The World](#).
- Type 2 is a baddie with a code of honor (*personal* order) that prevents them from doing [truly heinous things](#), or at least keeps them focused and disciplined, and if nothing else, you can count on them [to always keep their promises](#). Often a [Pragmatic Villain](#). This code of honor sometimes leads to the Type 2 conflicting with Type 1's when their values and codes conflict with those of main-stream society. This does not make them Chaotic. Types 2's do have a sense of order, just not the one that society at large possesses. If this is the case, expect the Type 2 to be a [Byronic Hero](#) or [Übermensch](#). They typically value loyalty in their minions and possess [Evil Virtues](#), and tend to be reliable allies in an [Enemy Mine](#) situation where [alignments](#) would fizzle out. The second type tends to either perform a [Heel-Face Turn](#) or suffer [death by redemption](#). The alternative is that they ultimately choose evil over this and cross the [Moral Event Horizon](#). Note that these two types are not mutually exclusive.
- Type 3 can be [The Dragon](#) in a [Five-Bad Band](#) or a minion of lower rank. Perhaps they lack the same pure drive that the [Big Bad](#) has, or maybe they're just not quite as smart, but they both do what they are told or do what they say that they are going to do, taking the most straightforward and efficient means of accomplishing the task they set out to do. They're a genuine threat, but they're not the *real* danger. If they're loyal to the [Big Bad](#) then they take orders without any problems, and they obey the [Big Bad](#) without any complaints. If the villains are going to be killed off, you can bet this guy is

going to go down with the [Big Bad](#). They are not [The Starscream](#) because of their loyalty to their boss, but they're just as mean in real life as they are at their job, so they're not a [Punch Clock Villain](#) either. Type 3 may work temporarily with [The Hero](#) if the [Big Bad](#) goes temporarily nuts, but this isn't a [Heel-Face Turn](#), as they will go straight back to their boss once it's all sorted out.

- Type 4 is a common case of characters that simply [hate freedom](#) and will enslave people [out of malice](#), or those who get their jollies from [imposing ridiculously harsh rules](#) with [even more ridiculous consequences](#) for breaking them. (Not totally arbitrary rules, though, that goes over to Chaotic.) [Dystopia Justifies the Means](#) can fall under this category and they use law and order principally as instruments of suffering and oppression for its own sake and not (just) that of power or running [The Empire](#) efficiently. They might keep up appearances of a [Noble Demon](#) but at best they will abuse the hell out of [Exact Words](#) and at their worst they will flat out lie and cheat in spite of it. Most Lawful Evil characters in *Dungeons & Dragons* are this type including *Hextor*, the iconic god of Lawful Evil. *Darkseid* is the classic example of this sort of villain and demonstrates just why it is the worst of the Lawful Evil types.

All four variants are likely to take advantage of [Questionable Consent](#), pushing people into "[agreements](#)" and then pushing them to uphold their end of the "bargain."

Lawful Evil characters may not be motivated by anything but a paycheck. Many soldiers and henchmen working for an evil government or ruler fall into the "lawful evil" category by default. Being a genuinely committed member of a military organization makes one lawful by default, and if the government or ruler one works for is evil, then one naturally falls into the category of "lawful evil."

If you have a difficulty deciding which alignment an evil-aligned character belongs to, the main difference between Lawful Evil, [Neutral Evil](#) and [Chaotic Evil](#) is not their devotion to their evil wishes, but the methods they believe are best to realize it:

- Even though there are some situations where they can't always use this method, Lawful Evil characters believe the best way is to have a specific, strict code of conduct, whether self-imposed or codified as a law. Their first impulse when making a moral decision is to refer back to this code; those with externally imposed systems (codes of laws, hierarchies, etc.) will try to work within the system when those systems go wrong. Depending on whether they are more Lawful or more Evil, they will either refuse to break the code even though it would hurt their evil objectives, or else break it only very reluctantly, and only when it would hurt their evil objectives if they kept their code.
- [Neutral Evil](#) characters are indifferent to [Order Versus Chaos](#), and their only interest is

in realizing their evil wishes. They will use whatever means will help in realizing their evil wishes, whether that means tearing down a code of laws, following a code of laws, creating an orderly society, causing the breakdown of justice, or staying away from society altogether. Their only goal is to realize their evil wishes, full stop.

- Most **Chaotic Evil** characters don't constantly break the law, but they cannot see much value in laws (or, for weaker-CCEs, do not see the value in laws that do not function solely to their depraved objectives). They believe that their own evil impulses are their best guides, and that tying themselves to any given code of conduct would be limiting their own ability to realize their depraved wishes. They do not get along with anyone who tries to instill any kind of order over the **Chaotic Evil** character, believing these people to be restricting their freedom; **Chaotic Evil** characters often focus very strongly on their own individual rights and freedoms, and will strongly resist any form of oppression of themselves.

In a nutshell, these are a variety of evil characters who **don't care if what they do is "heinous" or "horrible"**, but who will always follow certain rules.

Such characters are, for example:

A warlord who would kill anyone who threatens him — and, let's say, would always spare the enemies that can serve him; or someone who believes in **playing by the story conventions**; or a villain whose **word is absolutely binding** but would still kill a pregnant woman; or any kind of evil character that might commit mass genocide but for some reason **Will Not Tell a Lie**. Or a character who does, without flinching, anything their master orders them to do, anything, because their one rule is absolute obedience. A Lawful Evil character can also be an **Omnicidal Maniac** just as easily as **Neutral Evil** or **Chaotic Evil** can be; in such cases, they usually either hold **Fantastic Racism** towards all other living beings or they wish to impose a new order by annihilating everything and starting from scratch.

Remember, being **Lawful** does not imply at all that you have any moral standards, and any one of these character archetypes have just as much potential as a **Neutral Evil** or **Chaotic Evil** character to be truly despicable. Being Lawful may involve some kind of ethical values or moral codes, but they're more about abstract rules than actually caring about other people; alternatively, a lawful character may work within and abuse the rules. Lawful Evil is not always the "nicest" of the Evil alignments, though in individual cases the Lawfulness may make for a **Noble Demon**. It is just the most consistent and orderly. In short, an evil character who feels that the rules is what gives them strength or superiority. This includes upholding Evil as an ideal in and of itself, coupled with a sense of duty to promote it **wherever possible** and by **any means**. They're likely to **have standards**, but they're just as likely to have a

warped moral code regardless. Notably, *Hextor*, the iconic god of Lawful Evil in *Dungeons & Dragons* is the Type 4 style and is not sympathetic in the slightest. That being said, many, perhaps most evil characters who end up siding with heroes permanently without undergoing a [Heel-Face Turn](#) tend to be Lawful Evil, as they are the most likely of the evil alignments to work within the system; type 1s are particularly prone to this, due to their views on order.

Finally, it should be remembered that being Lawful Evil does not necessarily mean that the character in question is inclined to obey the actual laws of the land — many of them are fully prepared to commit illegal acts or to twist the laws to their own purposes, and even to annihilate entire systems or civilizations. A Type 1 may justify this by saying they are trying to create a superior lawful society; a Type 2 may assume that their own personal code supersedes any loyalty to the authority of mere mortals; a Type 3 may think that the only law they obey is that of their own masters; and a Type 4 sees the law primarily as a means to oppress others and fulfill their sadistic desires. No Lawful alignment is necessarily inclined to obey *every* law or *any* law.

**See Also:** [Lawful Good](#) , [Neutral Good](#), [Chaotic Good](#), [Lawful Neutral](#), [True Neutral](#), [Chaotic Neutral](#), [Neutral Evil](#), [Chaotic Evil](#)

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#### Lawful Evil type typically includes:

- [Abusive Parents](#) (if not [Lawful Neutral](#))
- [Anthropomorphic Personifications](#) that combine order with evil or who simply go to the extreme.
- Many [Affably Evil](#) characters
- [A.I. Is a Crapshoot](#)
- [Ancient Conspiracy](#), depending on how far they're willing to go.
- Any villain trying an [Assimilation Plot](#)
- [Amoral Attorney](#)
- [Aristocrats Are Evil](#)
- Most [Black Knights](#) (if they are not [Neutral Good](#), [Lawful Neutral](#) or [True Neutral](#))
- Most [Black Shirts](#)
- Some [Blood Knights](#), as they enjoy conquest and warfare but also have some appreciation for fair play and valor.
- [Bullies](#), when not [Neutral Evil](#).

- [The Caligula](#) (most often of either the Type 1 or 4 variety, if not [Chaotic Evil](#) or [Neutral Evil](#))
- The more ruthless versions of the [Church Militant](#).
- [Control Freaks](#) at their absolute worst.
- The more villainous [Corporate Samurai](#).
- Some [Corrupt Churches](#)
- [Corrupt Corporate Executive](#)
- Criminals whose modus operandi heavily relies on [Super OCD](#).
- [Culture Police](#)
- [Dark Messiah](#)
- [Deadly Decadent Court](#)
- [Dean Bitterman](#)
- [Diabolical Mastermind](#)
- More loyal types of [The Dragon](#).
- [Dirty Cop](#)
- [The Emperor who leads an evil Empire](#)
- [The Empire](#)
- [Evil Chancellor](#) (When aren't [Neutral Evil](#))
- One [Evil Counterpart](#) to a [Lawful Good](#) character regularly is this.
- [Evil Overlord](#)
- [Family Values Villain](#)
- Many [Faux Affably Evil](#) characters.
- [General Ripper](#)
- [Glorious Leader](#)
- [God, when he's evil](#).
- [The Government](#)
- [Hanging Judge](#)
- [Judge, Jury, and Executioner](#)

- Quite a bit of [Sociopathic Heroes](#) who find themselves "stuck" to the good side by a deal, contract or some similar bind, or simply out of a sense of loyalty to the heroes.
- [Killer Robot](#), as they follow strict programming and parameters, but what they do is usually evil.
- [Knight Templar](#)
- Classic portrayals of [The Mafia](#) and the [Yakuza](#)
- [Mayor Pain](#)
- The default alignment of most [MegaCorps](#) (as they're usually run by [Corrupt Corporate Executives](#) and often engage in [Industrialized Evil](#))
- [The Men in Black](#) (when they are not [Lawful Neutral](#))
- [The Neidermeyer](#)
- [Noble Demon](#), when he is actually evil and their "noble" side is because one code of honor
- Some [Obstructive Bureaucrats](#). Those who they aren't [Lawful Neutral](#) or [Lawful Stupid](#).
- [Politically Incorrect Villain](#)
- Most organized [Pragmatic Villains](#).
- [President Evil](#)
- [Evil Principles Zealots](#)
- [Professional Killer](#) (when they live up to their agreements or follow a strict code of honor).
- [Punch Clock Villain](#) when they really are evil.
- Adherents of the stricter forms of the [Religion of Evil](#).
- [Sadist Teacher](#)
- [Secret Police](#)
- [The Social Darwinist](#) (if not [Neutral Evil](#) or [Chaotic Evil](#))
- [Sociopathic Soldiers](#) of the [Jingoist](#) category.
- [State Sec](#)
- [Stepford Smiler](#)
- [Straight Edge Evil](#)

- [Sycophantic Servant](#)
  - [The Syndicate](#)
  - [Totalitarian Utilitarian](#)
  - [The Renfield](#)
  - [The Man](#)
  - [The Superego of an evil-aligned Freudian Trio.](#)
  - [The blue oni of an evil-aligned Red Oni, Blue Oni duo.](#)
  - [More villainous cases of The Fettered.](#)
  - [Those Wacky Nazis](#)
  - [Tragic Villain](#)
  - [Tyrant Takes the Helm: The bad new boss is in this arc is usually Lawful Evil.](#)
  - [Many Villains with Good Publicity](#)
  - [A Nazi by Any Other Name](#)
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## Examples

When dealing with the examples of specific characters, remember that assigning an alignment to a character who doesn't come with one is pretty **YMMV**. If you've got a problem with a character being listed here, it probably belongs on the discussion page. There will be no **Real Life** examples under any circumstances; it just invites an **Edit War**. Plus, real people are far too complex and multi-dimensional to really be classified by such a straightforward alignment system.

**On works pages: Character Alignment is only to be used in works where it is canonical, and only for characters who have alignments in-story. There is to be no arguing over canonical alignments, and no Real Life examples, ever.**

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**Alternative Title(s):** Lawful Selfish

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Just Following Orders	Loyalty Tropes	Lawful Good

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