

Step 1. Place garlic near every entrance of the room. This will keep him away.

Step 2. Hold onto a cross or other religious symbol. He will not touch you as long as you keep it on your person.

Step 3. Wait until sunrise. His powers will be nulled then and only during the day.

Step 4. Place a wild rose stem and holy water on his coffin lid. This will prevent escape.

Step 5. Drive a wooden stake into his heart

Step 6. Decapitate the un-dead fiend.

What a horrible night to have a curse, and what a wonderful night to bring back Creature Feature! After my Molyneaux meltdown in the last Creature Feature, I promised everyone a creature feature on the Prince of Darkness, himself. The Immortal Count. Nosferatu. The Impaler. The Night Walker. Vlad. The Vamp. That's absolutely right! Today, I will be covering Count Dracula! You got your wooden stakes and crosses? Then, let us go out this evening for pleasure; the night is still young.

Now, I should preface this by stating that the character of Count Dracula is NOT exclusive to video games. In fact, he didn't even originate in the young form of media! The Count has his twisted roots in an actual person, a man named Vlad III of

Wallachia—which is currently known as Romania. Vlad “Dracula” Tepes was a sadistic voivode (voy-wood), the equivalent of a prince. He was known for, among other things, impaling his victims on stakes slowly and painfully. This practice, meant to strike fear into any potential invaders and enemies, earned him the nickname “The Impaler”. Vlad and his father were both part of a secret fraternity of knights known as “The Order of the Dragon”. His father, having received much praise for his bravery against invading Ottoman Turks, was admitted to the fraternity with the nickname “Dracul”, meaning “Devil” or “Dragon”. As a result, Vlad III had been given the name “Dracula”, meaning “Son of the Dragon”.

In 1897, Irish author, Bram Stoker released a novel about a vampire based on the name, origins, and characteristics of Vlad The Impaler. The novel was titled “Dracula”. The book, while not the first to feature a vampire, served as the basis from which future depictions of vampires were portrayed. It also was the introduction for Count Dracula as a fictional character. It introduced readers to his powers, weaknesses, and main ambitions.

Dracula was a success, and what followed were multiple incarnations of him popping up in film, which was starting to

establish itself as a media powerhouse a few decades later. He was famously portrayed by Bela Lugosi and Sir Christopher Lee. Yes, the same one who played ANOTHER evil count.

With that short history lesson out of the way, let's sink our teeth into why we're really here: Castlevania.

Interestingly enough, the official Castlevania timeline states that the Dracula from Bram Stoker's novel is the very same one featured in the games. The novel sits somewhere in the middle of the timeline, and is canon in the Castlevania universe.

Before diving in to the main series of games, I should add that there are so many spin-offs and non-canon entries in the long-running franchise. I'll only be covering games that are specifically listed in the Castlevania timeline. Therefore, I will not be covering Dracula's appearances in these games:

(TEXT SCROLL: Vampire Killer, Haunted Castle, Super Castlevania IV, Castlevania: Dracula X, Castlevania Legends, Castlevania 64, Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness, Castlevania: Circle of the Moon, Castlevania Chronicles, Castlevania: Order of Shadows, Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth, Castlevania Judgement,

Castlevania: Harmony of Despair, Kid Dracula, Castlevania: The Arcade, Castlevania Pachislot)

I will also be covering Dracula's appearances in chronological order for a clearer narrative. With that in mind, let us begin!

In 1094, Mathias Cronqvist served alongside Leon Belmont as a holy knight. Cronqvist's family was full of alchemists and Mathias himself was pretty knowledgeable. Mathias married a young woman named Elisabetha, whom he loved deeply. While away fending off attackers in the east, Elisabetha died from an unspecified illness. The news of his beloved's death was too much for Mathias to bear, and he became bedridden. The knight had grown angry and resentful towards God, as he believed that God had taken his wife away from him while he was off fighting in his name. He felt that Elisabetha did not deserve to die so young, and in his rage, he decided to find a way to become immortal so that he could show God that he can exist outside of God's law. This plan was meant to take away some of God's virtually endless authority and domain over the universe. Mathias had wanted to show that someone could successfully defy God's will.

The bedridden Mathias revealed to Belmont that a powerful vampire lord named Walter Bernhard had captured Leon's fiancée,

Sara Trantoul. Leon arrived to save Sara, but was too late. Not wanting to become an inhuman vampire, she allowed Leon to kill her, binding her soul to his whip. This sacrifice gave the whip magical properties, and gave its wielder an edge against vampires. It was appropriately christened "Vampire Killer".

It was later revealed that Mathias had been the one who orchestrated Sara's kidnapping so that Leon would fight and kill the vampire lord in order to absorb his soul with the use of a vampiric artifact called the Crimson Stone. The Crimson Stone also bound the grim deity, Death, to Mathias as his eternal servant. Upon absorbing Walter's soul, Mathias's plan was complete, and he was able to transform into a powerful vampire. Feeling a tinge of responsibility for Sara's death, and having known the pain of losing a loved one, Mathias offered his former friend eternal life together with him as a powerful vampire. Leon, however, vowed that the Belmont family would hunt Mathias and demonkind until the end of time. Mathias turned into a bat, and flew away. Mathias and Leon never met again.

For the next few centuries, Mathias took in humans who had turned their back on God, and demons who had nowhere else to go. He built a magical castle in medieval Romania, then known as Wallachia.

In 1455, he met a kind, human woman by the name of Lisa Tepes. Lisa reminded Mathias very much of Elisabetha, and as such, he quickly took a liking to her. She sought knowledge and medicine in order to benefit humanity, both of which Mathias had at his disposal. The two married, and had a half-vampire son. He was named Adrien Fahrenheit Tepes. Rumors began to spiral around about Lisa's medical practices involving witchcraft. In 1475, Lisa was arrested under orders of the Catholic church, and was burned at the stake in broad daylight. Adrien witnessed his mother's death, but was unable to do anything about it, as he was powerless during the day. Mathias, however, had not heard the news of her death until nightfall. Upon hearing the news of Lisa's painful and brutal death at the hands of the church, Mathias became enraged. He changed his name to Vlad Dracula Tepes, and prepared to exact his revenge on humanity for taking his beloved from him, just as God had done the same a few centuries prior.

In 1476, news had reached Dracula that a hunting party led by Trevor C. Belmont was making its way to his castle. Dracula sat in his throne room, and awaited the arrival of his old friend's descendant. Dracula was confronted by Belmont, a sorceress named Sypha Belnades, a pirate king known as Grant DaNasty, and his own son, Adrien, who opposed him and his anti-humanity ideals.

Adrien took on the alias "Alucard" to signify his opposition, as it is merely "Dracula" spelled backwards. Dracula was defeated, and finally killed. However, before his death, he placed a curse on the land. Upon his death, the castle crumbled.

With Dracula's death, came another harsh truth: every 100 years, holy energy around the world would weaken, and man would darken their souls. At this point, Dracula would be resurrected.

In 1479, Death has tried to resurrect Dracula early, using one of his former generals who deserted as a vessel. It didn't go so well.

In 1576, it had come time for Dracula to rise once again. His human followers wanted him to return so that he would cleanse the Earth. When Dracula was resurrected that year, his castle returned with him, as his powers were linked to it. Dracula was now back at his full power, and was prepared to take revenge on humanity by sending out his forces to attack Transylvania.

Trevor's descendent, Christopher Belmont, had other plans, however. Christopher stormed the castle, and battled the immortal vampire. Dracula allowed his adversary to believe that he had been killed by turning into a mist form at the last second, and forcing the castle to crumble once again. Dracula

awaited for his power to return, now having the Belmont clan in his crosshairs.

In 1591, Dracula took control of Christopher's son, Soleiyu, through psychic influence. Dracula had planned to make his return through Soleiyu, and forced him to battle his father. After a brief battle, Christopher was able to expel Drac from his son's mind, but by then, Dracula had regained his full power. Tepes, regardless, didn't stand a chance against Belmont, and was killed once again.

Dracula returned for his centennial beating in 1691. Soleiyu's descendant, Simon Belmont, set out for Dracula's newly refurbished castle on Easter night. While Simon was able to kill the vampire, he left a nasty gash in Simon's back. Within the wound was a curse placed on not only Simon himself, but a curse on the entire land of Transylvania.

Seven years later, in 1698, Simon was slowly approaching his own demise, as the curse had taken its toll on him. A mysterious maiden appeared, informing Simon that he was to brave the demon-infested wilderness of Transylvania, collect Dracula's five body parts, and destroy them in the ruins of the castle. Simon brought the heart, rib, eye, nail, and ring of Dracula, which he

now PROCESSED, to the castle's remains. When Simon burned the remains, there was a sixth remain, the Fang of Vlad, which had gone unnoticed until then. Within the fang, the ghost of Dracula manifested itself. Seeing as this incarnation of Dracula suffered from a bad case of Skeletor, the ghost pretty much stood in place long enough for Simon to spam him with his O.P. arsenal consisting of a flaming whip, a golden knife, and a spirit bomb.

In 1748, Death sought to resurrect Dracula 50 years too early, and planned to do so through Maxim Kischine, a friend of Simon's grandson, Juste Belmont. It didn't go so well.

In 1792, Dracula was brought back by an evil priest named Shaft. The count's forces pillaged the European countryside, and kidnapped several young women, one of which was Annette Renard, the girlfriend of Juste's grandson, Richter Belmont. Shaft was defeated by Richter, and later, so was Dracula, who had grown amused of the never-ending cycle he has found himself in alongside the Belmonts. He had a philosophical discussion with Richter about morality, religion, and humanity before he took several whips to the face, and was given a holy water bath.

However, all was far from well. In 1797, Richter mysteriously vanished, and Dracula's castle rose again a mere five years after Dracula's defeat. This time, Alucard wanted to pay dear old dad a visit, and invaded the castle. He discovered that Richter was brainwashed by an apparition of Shaft, who was trying to resurrect Dracula. Richter was saved by Alucard, Shaft was destroyed for good, and the count shared some words with his son before and after their battle about why Alucard was determined to help humanity after what they did to his mother. Upon the bloodsucker's defeat, he asks Alucard to recite Lisa's last words for him. Alucard informs him that Lisa didn't want for them to hate humans, for theirs was already a hard lot. Lisa also told Alucard to tell Dracula that she would love him for all eternity. Finally showing regret for his actions, Dracula faded away after calling out for Lisa to forgive him and bidding his son farewell.

Following Dracula's death, the Belmont family went into obscurity, and relinquished possession of the Vampire Killer whip. This is when organizations started popping up to handle Dracula in the Belmonts' stead. This included the Order of Ecclesia in the 1800's, and their development of Glyphs, harnessed by a woman named Shanoa. Dracula was resurrected, and quickly defeated yet again. Are you starting to see the pattern

here? In 1897, Dracula was killed once again by a team consisting of Jonathan Harker, his wife Mina, Quincey Morris, John Seward, and Abraham Van Helsing.

(Holds Up A Copy of DRACULA)

Read it.

In 1914, World War I broke out thanks to the efforts of Dracula's niece, Elizabeth Bartley. She planned to use the millions of souls from those that had died to resurrect her uncle. John Morris, son of the late Quincey Morris, who had possession of the Vampire Killer whip, set out with his friend, Eric Lecarde to stop Bartley from resurrecting Dracula. Dracula was resurrected, anyways. It didn't go so well. For any of them.

In 1944, Dracula was resurrected by a vampiric artist named Brauner, who rejected his humanity after losing his daughters during the first World War. Brauner was tricked, and Dracula was resurrected once again by Death, and it was up to John's son, Jonathan, who was, by this point, in possession of the whip, accompanied by his friend, Charlotte Aulin, a young witch. Dracula and Death finally got the bright idea to gang up on

their attackers, but failed to execute it properly when Dracula devoured Death halfway through the fight. What a bro.

In 1999, Dracula was killed for good by Julius Belmont, who had regained rightful possession of the Vampire Killer whip. Julius achieved this by sealing Dracula and his castle inside of a solar eclipse, but at the cost of being stuck inside the castle, himself, and developing amnesia. There was a war or something.

And in the early 2000's, Konami likewise killed Castlevania for good, never having made the 1999 game they loved to tease us all about.

There are other events in the timeline following the 1999 Demon Castle War, but they more or less follow Dracula's successor as the "paragon of evil" and his attempts to reject that destiny. They're pretty cool. Julius is awesome. Hammer is too good, too pure for this world. Alucard works for the Japanese government. It's great.

There was, however, another timeline created around the time Konami started to dive off the deep-end. This is called the "Lords of Shadow" timeline. In this universe, Brotherhood of Light crusader, Gabriel Belmont was tricked by Satan into

becoming Dracula in the year 1046 after pulling an Anakin Skywalker, and killing his own wife while trying to save her. Secretly, she gave birth to a baby prior to this, and named him Trevor. Trevor was taken in and raised by the Brotherhood. When he had grown up, and had a family of his own, the Brotherhood informed him that his dad kind of sucks. Literally. In 1073, Trevor set out to avenge his mother. It didn't go so well. Dracula, having realized that he just killed his son after looking into the magical Mirror of Fate, feeds Trevor some of his blood, and placed him into a coffin labelled "Alucard". In 1103, Trevor awakened as a vampire, only to discover that his son, Simon had set out to avenge him. Helping Simon take down Dracula, they seemingly managed to kill him. Until Dracula reappears in present-day, alive and well. Maybe "alive" wasn't the best term to use. Come of think of it, Dracula just wanted to die at this point, so we can't really say he's "well" , either. He exists.

Dracula takes on so many different forms throughout the games, he has so many different abilities, and so many different weaknesses. The classical laundry list of powers and weaknesses established in the novel further complicates this. Some of his more consistent abilities are strength comparable to 20 men, his seemingly impassable charisma, his ability to turn into a bat, a

wolf, or a mist, his ability to control animals and demons to an insane degree, immortality, the ability to inflict vampirism, and the ability to control the minds of humans, while also communicating telepathically with them.

The weaknesses are even more of a confusing mess. In the novel, while he is weak to sunlight, he does not die from exposure to it, but in some of the games, the sun is ultimately what causes him to disintegrate. Dracula is an enigma, but he's an enigma that stands the test of time. I do not think that I will ever truly tire of whipping the old count, or tossing holy water at him. Dracula has inspired so many terrific heroes and villains in fiction—Without him, there would be no Alucard from Hellsing, Dio Brando from JoJo's Bizarre Adventure, or even Gebel, the villain of the upcoming Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night.

In the end, Dracula is such a prolific legend that it has become impossible for man to truly and completely pick him apart. I have merely scratched the surface of this bloodsucking aristocrat. I am only one man, and what is a man, but a miserable little pile of secrets?