The sample characters are intended to show guidelines for what kinds of tradeoffs are reasonable.

Basically, you want roughly the same number of positive and negative alterations, and you want them to be of relatively equal magnitude. It would be unreasonable to take a -5 to a skill for a +5 to an attribute, for example.

GMs do make mistakes, and it may be necessary to retroactively correct a homebrew that leaves a character unbalanced–either too weak or too strong. If this happens, it is best to open a dialogue with the player, explain how the mistake was made, and work to create a story reason that would explain the re-balancing of the character.

Sample Character: Rho 3784-B

Race: Robot

Size: medium

STR 30  
CON 20  
DEX 20  
INT 20  
WIS 30

CHA 10  
LCK 10

SPD 20

Tradoffs

– Cannot use magic

+ Immune to magic drain spells and effects

– Cannot take skills in any magic school or use magic spells

+ Variety of study: Choose one extra major skill.

+ Increased focus on skills +5 to one skill.

+) Does not need to eat, drink, breathe, sleep etc.

–Vulnerable 5 to electric and water attacks.

–Takes ongoing 10 damage while submerged.

–Has the Confused condition when exposed to magnets.

–Must be oiled once a week or takes a cumulative 50% penalty to speed.

–Must spend 4 hours of inactivity per day in the sunlight, or 8 hours of activity. Without this, has dazed condition.

+Natural Armor +2 AC

The robot’s biggest bonus is its lack of need for physical necessities. What could be overpowered is mitigated by a need to “recharge” (in this case solar powered), which emulates sleep, and need to be oiled or have regular maintenances performed. This acts as a kind of tether for the character, so it cannot run off into completely desolate areas for weeks at a time.

The second half of the robot is the lack of magic, which may be a common tradeoff among characters. If a character has no connection to magic, it follows that they would be unaffected by any effect that attempt to manipulate that connection, for positive or negative. The additional skills help to add balance to the character. Since magic adds bonuses both in and out of combat, the player was given no restrictions on which skill they can “reassign” that missed field of study into.

Sample character: Chad “Please call me Vlad” Dreshmire

Race: Vampire

Size: medium

STR 10

CON 10  
DEX 40  
INT 20  
WIS 10  
CHA 15  
LCK 30

SPD 20

Tradeoffs:

•Attribute trades : +10 Dex, -10 INT

–Feed dependency

–Must drink blood every 48 hours or is dazed and Speed is reduced by 10. If more than 7 consecutive days without blood, dies.

+Will not die of old age; for a wound to be fatal it must have fire or holy damage, pierce the heart, or separate the head. If the vampire would die except for these conditions, he is unconscious until he is buried in soil for 48 consecutive hours.

+No need to eat, breath, or sleep.

–Cannot cross running water, if touching silver, garlic or religious symbols, take ongoing 2 damage.

–Cannot enter a home uninvited

–Vulnerable 5 holy, fire damage.

/ Doesn’t appear in mirrors

+ +5 stealth

+5 CHA

The main advantage of a vampire is the invulnerability, which is directly mitigated by the burial clause–Once dead, the vampire relies on someone else to bury him to be truly immortal. The major drawback is the feed dependency, but this is mitigated by the lack of need to eat, breathe, or sleep. The bonuses to stealth and Charisma offset the (mostly roleplay) vulnerabilities and restrictions.

The attribute trading is independent from the vampirism, and also a very common homebrew. As long as the trade is balanced (or, if unbalanced, slightly more negative than positive), stay within limits (10-100), and the DM is comfortable with it, all attribute trades are legal.

Sample character: Chyntia Altwine

Race: Mermaid

Size: medium

STR 20

CON 10  
DEX 30  
INT 20  
WIS 10  
CHA 30  
LCK 20

SPD 20

Tradeoffs:

+Can breathe under water

–Cannot breathe air

+ Speed increases by 15 in water

–Speed decreases by 15 on land

/ Disguise has to be one of the major skills

+ Bite attack as unarmed

+ +5 to Unarmed skill

+Start with spell “scream”

–Cannot speak

Some DMs or players might not be comfortable removing a character’s ability to speak. It is generally a good idea to ensure a character has a method of communicating with the rest of the party. This build of mermaid would be ideal for an underwater campaign, where land-based creatures would be unable to speak anyway.

Include text akin to from original folklore, etc.