

Ubiquity Social Class 2.4

The introduction of social class into the *Ubiquity Roleplaying System*TM requires changes to a variety of system elements. This class system is meant to be representative of cultures such as Victorian Era Britain, but can easily be used for other similar cultures, or even supposedly “classless” societies like the United States.

Primary Attribute

Class

Class represents the social stratum to which your character belongs. He may have been born into it, worked his way up, or fallen from grace. It partly determines what Skills he can learn, as well as the ease with which he acquires his life’s desires; see *Character Generation Overview, Skills and Resources*. Characters with high Class are privileged and wealthy, used to the finer things in life. Those of low Class often struggle just to survive, and have learned from the school of hard knocks rather than a fine university.

Rating	Class Description	Resource XP Cost
1	Working class	-0
2	Tradesman	-2
3	Middle Class	-4
4	Gentry	-6
5	Aristocracy	-8
6	Royalty	-10

In some cultures it is virtually impossible to change your social class, while others are more flexible. The social classes named in the table could also have different names depending on the culture. Consider them to be general indicators of social rank. In the United States, a Class rating of 5 or 6 might be listed as “Magnate” or “Tycoon.”

Class does not automatically grant wealth and standing, nor does it preclude it. It is entirely possible to be a bankrupt and exiled duke living off his relatives, or a black sheep frequently found in seedy opium dens. It is also possible to be a working class inventor who makes a modest amount off his contraptions, or a middle class doctor to whom people accord great respect.

Class Rolls: Class affects social rolls in a unique way. The difference in Class ratings between the actor and the target is applied as a penalty to the actor’s dice pool. Whether the target’s Class rating is higher or lower than the actor’s is irrelevant, just the amount by which they differ. This does not apply to Bluster or Precedence rolls (see below), nor when dealing with a Contact, Follower or Mentor. The GM will need to make a judgment call when dealing with significantly different cultures.

Bluster

Dice Pool: Precedence x 2

Skill Substitution: Con

Action Type: Standard

Make a Bluster roll whenever your character needs to momentarily convince someone that he is of a higher station to gain access to an exclusive club, or gain a temporary credit line with a merchant. The base Difficulty of the roll depends on the difference between your character's actual Class rating and the Class rating he's trying to emulate. Your dice pool is modified by the difference between the Intelligence ratings of your character and his target. Failing the roll means that your character is turned out or possibly has the police called on him.

Secondary Attribute

Precedence

Precedence represents your character's ability to exert social pressure, take control of a situation, and dictate a course of action. It is not about convincing people to believe you or that you are right, simply about getting them to do what you want. Precedence rolls are sometimes opposed versus an individual's Precedence, other times versus a set Difficulty determined by a crowd's average Class rating. Your dice pool may be modified by crowd size.

Precedence = (Class + Charisma) or Intimidation

Characters with high Precedence ratings are commanding and used to taking charge, while those with low Precedence ratings are mild-mannered and follow others' leads.

Crowd Size	Penalty
20	-2
40	-4
80	-6
160	-8

Talents

Affable

Prerequisites: None

Your character is better able to interact with members of other classes of society, not allowing class barriers to ruffle his feathers, and putting others at ease.

Benefit: Your character and anyone dealing with him may ignore up to -2 in penalties to social rolls due to Class rating difference.

Normal: The difference in Class between the character and the target of his social rolls acts as a penalty to the actor's pool.

Advanced: You may buy this Talent twice, the second purchase allowing a character to ignore a further -2 penalty (for a total of -4).

Authority

Prerequisites: Charisma 3

Your character has a natural air of authority to which those of lesser birth respond.

Benefit: Your character gains a +2 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidation rolls made versus those with the same or lower Class rating.

Normal: The character gains no bonus to Diplomacy or Intimidation rolls.

Advanced: You may buy this Talent up to three times, with each additional purchase granting a further +2 bonus.

Commanding

Prerequisites: None

Your character is a natural leader, able to take control of many situations.

Benefit: Your character gains a +2 Precedence rating.

Normal: Your character's Precedence rating is unmodified.

Advanced: You may buy this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Precedence rating.

Innocuous

Unique

Prerequisites: None

Your character is able to fade into the background, even in the absence of a crowd.

Benefit: Your character can pretend he belongs in a certain situation, a valet at a gentlemen's club or a gardener on an estate, for instance. Unless he does something obvious, he won't be noticed for a number of minutes equal to his Intelligence. Every minute after this period there is a chance someone notices his presence—make a Con roll versus a Difficulty of 2; every additional minute, make another Con roll, increasing the Difficulty by 1 each time.

Normal: Your character is automatically noticed as not belonging in a given situation.

One of the Lads

Prerequisites: Slummer

Your character has not only learned to interact with a group outside his own, but has been accepted more or less as one of them.

Benefit: Your character may take Allies, Contacts and Followers from groups that he has learned to interact with per the Slummer Talent, even if doing so violates the normal Class restrictions for those Resources.

Normal: You character must adhere to the normal Class restrictions for Allies, Contacts and Followers.

Advanced: You can take this Talent multiple times, but the benefit applies to a different group each time.

Royalty

Unique

Prerequisites: Class 5

Your character is royalty, party of the ruling family of a sovereign state, perhaps the actual ruler. Justifying a life adventuring will be difficult.

Benefit: Your character gains a +1 Class rating. This bonus affects his Class rolls and raises his maximum Class rating by one point.

Normal: Your character's Class rating is unmodified.

Slummer**Prerequisites:** None

Your character has learned the proper protocols for social interaction with a particular group of people in a level of society other than his.

Benefit: When this Talent is taken, choose a particular group of people; for example, sailors, policemen, surgeons, or the House of Lords. The group shouldn't be too broad, but should be useful. Your character and anyone from this group suffer no penalties to social rolls due to Class difference when dealing with each other.

Normal: Your character only socializes within his class, and suffers penalties when interacting with those outside of it.

Advanced: You can take this Talent multiple times, but the benefit applies to a different group each time.

Superior Attack**Prerequisites:** Class 3

Your character is angry at those "above" him, or simply knows he is better than his opponents, using the fortune of his birth to fuel his confidence in combat.

Benefit: Your character uses his Class rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

Normal: Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for his combat Skills.

Advanced: You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

Superior Defense

Unique

Prerequisites: Class 3

Your character is proud of his birthright, or is bitter about his station in society, using the feeling to lend him strength in the fight.

Benefit: Your character uses his Class instead of Dexterity when calculating his Active Defense and Defense ratings.

Normal: Your character uses his Dexterity when calculating his Defense ratings.

Special: You may not buy this Talent if your character already has the Bold Defense or Calculated Defense Talent. (*Note that those two Talents also cannot be taken if this one is.*)

Superior Education**Prerequisites:** Class 3

Your character may not be the smartest guy in town, but money can pay for good teachers.

Benefit: Your character uses his Class rating as the Base Attribute for a specific Skill that normally uses Intelligence as the Base Attribute (designate one when you take this Talent).

Normal: Your character uses Intelligence as the standard Base Attributes for the designated Skill.

Advanced: You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

Resources

Most Resources require changes. Most tweaks are minor, with Status and Wealth receiving the biggest makeover. Changes are noted below. Note that the monetary aspect of Status and the monetary progression for Wealth from HEX core are retained.

Allies

Allies must possess the same Class rating as your character.

Contacts

A Contact's Class rating can differ by no more than 1 from your character's rating. For example, a character with a Class rating of 3 could have Contacts with a Class rating of 2, 3 or 4.

Followers

Followers may not have a Class rating higher than your character's.

Mentors

In addition to the benefits Mentors can already grant a character, they can also help him learn non-Class Skills at a lower XP cost. Characters may learn Skills outside their normal Class range, but possessed by their Mentor, as range skills (e.g., normal XP cost). The maximum Skill level allowed to be gained in this manner is the Mentor's Skill level minus one; the character can continue to train in the Skill, but at the normal non-Class double XP cost.

Example: If you want to increase a non-Class Skill level from 1 to 2, the normal cost would be 8 XP [2 (desired level) x 2 (normal multiplier) x 2 (non-Class multiplier) XP]. However, if the character's Mentor possessed the Skill, the cost would be the normal 4 XP [2 (desired level) x 2 (normal multiplier) XP].

Rank

As military rank, a character's Rank level may not exceed his Class rating. Membership of non-military organizations should be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis. A thieves' guild would have very different Class restrictions than the Freemasons.

Status

Status represents how well regarded you are by others, and helps to offset cross-class interaction penalties. Any time your character's social status or reputation applies to a situation, you receive a bonus to any related social rolls. Your character also starts play with a monthly income in cash. Each level lists a base income. This base is multiplied by your character's Class rating squared. For example, a Class 1 character with Status 2 would have a monthly income of \$10 ($\$10 \times 1 \times 1$); a Class 3 character with Status 2 would have a monthly income of \$90 ($\$10 \times 3 \times 3$). If a character increases his Class rating, his Status-related income automatically increases along with it.

Status	Base Monthly Income	Benefit
0	\$3 (12s)	+1 bonus
1	\$6 (£1 4s)	+2 bonus
2	\$10 (£2)	Bonus Resource
3	\$20 (£4)	+4 bonus
4	\$40 (£8)	Bonus Resource
5	\$100 (£20)	+8 bonus

Note that the pounds-sterling conversions use a rough £1 = \$5 equivalency (the exchange rate in 1889 was £0.21 = \$1).

Wealth

Your character starts play with a monthly income in cash. Each level lists a base income. This base is multiplied by your character's Class rating squared. For example, a Class 1 character with Wealth 3 would have a monthly income of \$40 ($\$40 \times 1 \times 1$); a Class 3 character with Wealth 3 would have a monthly income of \$360 ($\$40 \times 3 \times 3$). If a character increases his Class rating, his Wealth-related income automatically increases along with it.

Wealth	Base Monthly Income
0	\$5 (£1)
1	\$10 (£2)
2	\$20 (£4)
3	\$50 (£10)
4	\$200 (£40)
5	\$1000 (£200)

Note that the pounds-sterling conversions use a rough £1 = \$5 equivalency (the exchange rate in 1889 was £0.21 = \$1).

Flaw

Lout

Your character has a way of letting an inappropriate or telling remark slip at just the wrong time. Whether it's contempt for the working man or just some off-color remark concerning a lady, it will be heard by all the wrong people and betray your character's origins. You earn a style point whenever you let a comment slip at a particularly inopportune moment.

Pariah

Your character has committed a tremendous faux pas and is only tolerated in his normal social circles. He may have had an embarrassing fetish or improper dalliance publicly exposed, or is constantly acting above his station. Your character suffers a -2 penalty to social rolls within his Class (possibly others). You earn a Style point whenever your character is given the cold shoulder or otherwise hurt due to his reputation.

Character Generation Overview

Primary Attributes

In Step 3 of character creation, distribute 18 points among the Primary Attributes.
Additional Primary Attribute: Class

Secondary Attributes

In Step 4 of character creation, calculate Secondary Attributes.
Additional Secondary Attribute: Precedence

Skills

Each Skill has a range of Class ratings. In Step 5 of character creation, the 15 Skill points are distributed normally regardless of Class rating. However, in Step 8 and during play, characters with Class ratings within the listed range pay the normal cost for the Skill, while those with Class ratings outside the range pay twice the normal amount. A listed range of “–” means any character may take this Skill at normal cost.

Skill	Attribute	Class Range
Academics*	Intelligence	3 – 6
Acrobatics	Dexterity	1 – 3
Animal Handling	Charisma	–
Archery	Dexterity	–
Art*	Intelligence	3 – 6
Athletics	Strength	1 – 4
Brawl	Strength	1 – 3
Bureaucracy	Intelligence	3 – 5
Con	Charisma	–

Craft*	Intelligence	1 – 3
Demolitions	Intelligence	2 – 4
Diplomacy	Charisma	4 – 6
Drive	Dexterity	3 – 5
Empathy	Intelligence	–
Firearms	Dexterity	–
Focus	Willpower	–
Gambling	Intelligence	–
Gunnery	Intelligence	2 – 4
Intimidation	Charisma	–
Investigation	Intelligence	3 – 4
Larceny	Dexterity	1 – 2
Linguistics	Intelligence	–
Martial Arts*	Strength	1 – 3
Medicine	Intelligence	3 – 5
Melee	Strength	1 – 5
Performance	Charisma	1 – 3
Pilot*	Dexterity	3 – 5
Ride	Dexterity	–
Science*	Intelligence	3 – 6
Sorcery*	Charisma	–
Stealth	Dexterity	1 – 2
Streetwise	Charisma	1 – 2
Survival	Intelligence	1 – 3
Warfare	Intelligence	3 – 6

**Specialized Skill*

Resources

In Step 5 of character creation, characters gain an additional Resource; this Resource must be an Ally, Contact, Follower or Mentor. In Step 8 of character creation and during play, characters are granted a reduction to the XP cost of Resources, depending on their Class rating (see the Class table). This reduction is not applied at Resource level 0. For example, a character with Class 3 (-4 XP reduction), would still pay 7 XP for a level-0 Resource, but when upgrading to level 1, would only pay 4 additional XP, rather than the usual 8 XP.

Integrating Social Class

A note of caution for those contemplating the use of these rules — if not fully integrated into play, the Class Attribute can easily become a “dump stat,” allowing players to create characters that are stronger in other areas than they should be. Integration requires a little more work by the GM, but what does “integration” mean? Some examples:

- Setting Class and Rank limitations for any organizations in the campaign. An ironmongers' guild isn't likely to have an aristocrat as its leader, nor does the British House of Commons have a lot of dockworkers as Members.
- Businesses generally cater to certain classes (and many times, specific professions) of patrons, for example, an upper crust tea house (Class 4–5) or a dockside fish market (Class 1–3). Many places will be strictly off limits (or back-door only) for entire segments of the population, employees notwithstanding.
- Members of a specific class can gain social prominence through profession and service, so a middle class physician (Class 3) may frequently socialize “above his station” due to respect for his profession (and proper conduct of course). This is represented through the Status Resource.
- Social rolls aren't the only rolls that might be affected by Class. Attempts at disguise or blending in outside a character's normal scene would probably also suffer, because those activities are just as much about behavior as appearance.

Using class in your game will change it significantly, adding a significant social aspect to game play, and often complicating life for the heroes. A game largely taking place away from civilization or in a culture very unlike the heroes' probably shouldn't utilize these rules, as the structure in which the characters are built will no longer exist. If you plan to run a high adventure game, like *Hollow Earth Expedition* or *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, don't use social class, but if you want to run something more akin to the Sherlock Holmes stories or *Space: 1889*, then by all means do.