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A cleric from the tabletop game Dungeons and Dragons

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« Dungeons and Dragons and Doors Character classes are archetypes that modify attributes, abilities, and role of a game character. A class typically includes a thematic aspect, for instance a Demon Hunter class, suggests abilities for tracking and fighting demons and implies a world where demons exist and can be hunted. Many RPGs invite you to choose a class before starting the game to determine what abilities are available to you during play. Where Did the Character Class Idea Come From? The answer is always Dungeons and Dragons. However classes do stretch back a little further into D&D's wargaming roots. Light vs Heavy Infantry, an Archer vs a Pikeam, for wargames these roles are set at the start of the game and the characters in battlefield do not 'switch from one class to another. The idea of class also permeates our daily lives, words like class and caste divide humans into types with different social abilities and attributes. A tabletop RPG game is an environment that calls out for the concept of class. Players want their adventurers to have something special and different about them and D&D's roots meant it was naturally inclined to satisfy this want. A Persistent Trio The first three classes in Original Dungeons and Dragons were: Fighting Man Magic-User Cleric In these early days the phrase "character class" wasn't used instead they used the term class or perhaps character type, character class came later. Fighter Man eventually became Fighter and Magic-User, Mage or Wizard. These three original classes were passed down through generations of game releases. Over 20 years later in 1995, Hexen, a fantasy Doom shooter, was released and gave the player the choice of three classes: As time passes the Thief class becomes a popular replacement for the Cleric. The Cleric was always the odd-ball of the original three and a pure D&D invention. The D&D Origin of Clerics The Cleric is the class that's most uniquely D&D's invention. There are few warrior priests or cleric types wandering around the fantasy literature of the day. The class draws on a mix of influences from both Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, the two main creative forces behind D&D. Below is one part of the origin story for D&D Clerics. Here is how I heard the story from my friend William Crowley, one of Dave Arneson's original players. Ahem. I was there. In CHAINMAIL there were wizards that functioned as artillery. Then there was Dave Arneson's first miniatures/roleplaying campaign. Some players were 'good guys' and some players were 'bad guys' and Dave was the referee. One of the 'bad guys' wanted to play a Vampire. He was extremely smart and capable, and as he got more and more experience he got tougher and tougher. This was the early 70s, so the model for 'vampire' was Christopher Lee in Hammer films. No deep folklore shit. Well, after a time, nobody could touch Sir Fang. Yes, that was his name. To fix the threatened end of the game they came up with a character that was, at first, a 'vampire hunter'. Peter Cushing in the same films. As the rough specs were drawn up, comments about the need for healing and for curing disease came in. To da, the "priest" was born. Changed later to 'cleric'. The bit about edged weapons was from Gary's reading the old stories about the Archbishop Turpin (who) who wielded a mace because he was not want to shed blood (who lives by the sword dies by the sword)". Hammer Film productions was a British movie company that made classic monster movies in the 60s and 70s, including a series of Dracula movies. Pictured below is the 1970s Hammer "horror" "The Blood of Dracula" which shows his bravery in going crusades toward an oft-seen vampire, Peter Cushing, who is pictured below, in many Hammer "horror" movies about vampires, like the movies, Van Helsing which was a polymath doctor with a knowledge of the occult, but he's only human with no supernatural powers. Dave Arneson built on Van Helsing by adding magical abilities including "Turn Undead". Turn Undead was the act of brandishing a holy symbol to force undead creatures to shrink back and flee. Gary Gygax further transformed the Cleric class into something-like a Roman-Catholic warrior saint that called on god to grant miracles, chose not to use blades weapons for religious reasons but was still more martial than the Magic Users of the game. Bishop Odo and Friar Tuck were listed as inspirations for the class by Gygax, as well as Father Shandor from Hammer Horror. Here's the original description of the Cleric from original D&D. Clerics: Clerics gain some of the advantages from both of the other two classes (Fighting-Men and Magic-Users) in that they have the use of magic armor and all non-edged magic weapons (no arrows!), plus they have numbers of their own spells. In addition, they are able to use more of the magical items than are the Fighting-Men. When Clerics reach the top level (Patriarch) they may opt to build their own stronghold, and when doing so receive help from "above". [...] - Men and Magic Book, Original Dungeons and Dragons Practically the class functions as an additional melece class that can provide healing and support and as a bonus is very effective against undead. For D&D, this class has the most world building built-in. It also make it an excellent example of what a good class should be, it's not boring and it's not simple. The Magic User The Magic User is the ranged class-cannon class. It can dish out a lot of damage but can't take as much as the other two. The quality of magical powers that Magic User has access to is also rather different than the Cleric. Below is quote that expresses the inherent quality of magical powers quite well, it's an interesting read. The Meditative warrior appears to be a distinct type of magical user, a long and narrow class, whose powers are restricted to recover spells as inspired by the system from Jack Vance's Dying Earth series. The Magic-Users may arm themselves with wands or staves of Original D&D rules are quite open to interpretation but for this article it's enough to acknowledge that classes are being used to both restrict and enable what a character can do as they play the game. The Fighting Man The title "Fighting Man" is more fun than fighter or warrior. For D&D this would have covered everything from knights to Conan-style barbarians. Fighting men can use all weapons, including magic weapons and wear armor. However they cannot cast spells. They get higher starting hit points. 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As you can see it's quite complicated and accessing each those classes has certain requirements. Party vs the Solo Adventurer Strict class systems work best with a party of characters. The first CRPG, pdit&s, was based on D&D but was singleplayer and therefore it removed the classes entirely and allowed players to access the abilities of all the D&D classes. In a single player game you choose your class at the start and then you don't have a chance to see what any of the other classes were like unless you start a new game. This means there's potentially a lot of developer effort going into making game content that few people experience. In the tabletop world it's common knowledge that a human fighter is the most popular character class for people to play. That is why many single character games don't have a strict class system. Single player class games work best when you'll play the game a lot i.e. something like a Roguelike. 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The Magic-Users may arm themselves with wands or staves of Original D&D rules are quite open to interpretation but for this article it's enough to acknowledge that classes are being used to both restrict and enable what a character can do as they play the game. The Fighting Man The title "Fighting Man" is more fun than fighter or warrior. For D&D this would have covered everything from knights to Conan-style barbarians. Fighting men can use all weapons, including magic weapons and wear armor. However they cannot cast spells. They get higher starting hit points. The Roads We've Taken Hundreds of CRPGs releases since the 1970s have played with the concept class. Let's take at some innovations. Strict or Loose D&D started with strict character classes. You make your choice and you're given an ability space to grow into. There's no fitting between classes. A loose class system is one where you might choose a starting class but you are not locked into certain abilities, any ability or spell is available to you through gameplay. Dark Souls is a recent CRPG that has a loose class system, you choose a class but it only impacts starting equipment and stats, you can find any of that starting equipment in the game and you're free to modify your stats as you wish as you level up. Daggerfall and many of the other Elder Scrolls game employ similar loose systems. The Elder Scrolls progression mechanic tends to follow the pattern "the more you do an action the better you get", so if you want to increase your magic you cast spells. If you want to get better at jumping you jump more. Ultima Online also used a similar system. Then there are shades of grey. Later versions of D&D allowed for subclasses, you take 5 levels as a Fighter, then 1 as a Wizard and so on. These still retained some of strict features - after getting to the 5th level of a wizard, you can't cast spells. However, the fact that you can't cast spells is a bit of a cheat, you can't cast spells, but you can still use magic. The fact that you can't cast spells is a bit of a cheat, you can't cast spells, but you can still use magic. This covers a lot of the "higher level" classes. In this game the class are called "jobs". It's not that unusual, in fact, since many games have class progression; seeing a player proceed through warrior classes, knight classes, to sword master and so on. Each class grant different benefits for a power curve that stretches a bit further for longer game. Here's the job map for the first Final Fantasy Tactics game. As you can see it's quite complicated and accessing each those classes has certain requirements. Party vs the Solo Adventurer Strict class systems work best with a party of characters. The first CRPG, pdit&s, was based on D&D but was singleplayer and therefore it removed the classes entirely and allowed players to access the abilities of all the D&D classes. In a single player game you choose your class at the start and then you don't have a chance to see what any of the other classes were like unless you start a new game. This means there's potentially a lot of developer effort going into making game content that few people experience. In the tabletop world it's common knowledge that a human fighter is the most popular character class for people to play. That is why many single character games don't have a strict class system. Single player class games work best when you'll play the game a lot i.e. something like a Roguelike. In a party of

Warrior, possessing the power of Darkness and often necromantic or dark-magic-oriented abilities that deal large amounts of damage to enemies, although often at the cost of their own HP. They may have abilities that lower their target's stats or inflict status effects also. As the opposite of the Paladin, they may do more damage to light-based enemies such as angels, fairies or other traditionally good/holy creatures even if Light is Not Their Biggest Weakness. They generally do not suffer the behavioral limitations of Paladins, except possibly when they arise the literal counterpart of Paladins and need to behave accordingly. The Skirmisher. Other Names: Rebel, Soldier, Fallen Knight, Outlaw, Brigand. A cross between a Fighter and Ranger due to a mix of martial capability and survival instincts. Usually differentiated from other fighters as being against the law or higher authority, particularly in counterpart to the knight who upholds/represents the law/higher authority. Sometimes appear under-equipped and/or using improvised or stolen equipment. They usually have an expert sense of guerrilla warfare and survival tactics at their disposal compared to better equipped foes to balance the odds, comparable to that of a Warrior, but is not necessarily a leader. The Soldier. Other Names: Arbalest, Grenadier, Musketeer, Crossbowman. The other variation on the Fighter-Ranger combination, the Soldier is a Fighter that defines himself by fighting primarily with a ranged weapon, typically a crossbow or primitive rifle, although variations with hefty longbows or throwing weapons are also not unheard of. Excluding their choice of weapon, a Soldier is a pure Fighter with little to no Ranger-like elements, tending to be affiliated more with civilization, dress in heavy armor or uniform, and fight directly, occasionally mixing in grenades or teamwork-oriented abilities. The Sage. Other Names: Druid, Bishop, Red Mage, Mystic Theurge. The Sage is a spellcaster that is capable of accessing the spell list of both Mages and Clerics, usually meaning being able to both blast enemies and heal allies. Naturally this level of versatility puts the Sage at risk of being an overpowered class. Some games rectify this by making the Sage a Prestige Class, making the leg up they have over other casters less of an issue. Other games put on limitations compared to dedicated mages and clerics, such as weaker spellpower, less Mana and/or locking them out of some spells that dedicated casters have access to. The limitations do have the danger of going too far and making a Sage a Master of None, so to combat this issue some games make up for the limitations by giving them something unique to the Sage like exclusive spells or being more physically capable than other casters. The Cantor. The Cantor sings not just songs but hymns acting as a cross between the Bard and the Priest. Cantors generally have more focus on healing abilities than a standard Bard, but instead of having attacks which harm demonic creatures and The Undead, a Cantor makes their allies better at fighting such creatures. Alternatively a Cantor may specialize in supporting other Cleric classes, such as restoring their Mana or increasing the potency of their healing spells. Can overlap with Dancer for characters who use religious dances, such as Miko.Rarer Classes: The following character classes appear often but not consistently, depending on both the type of world and game the author is attempting to create. These classes are less common due to having elements that feel more at home in Science Fiction than fantasy, not fitting in with the setting's cultures or require implementing a Mechanically Unusual Class.
Rarer Class Archetypes
The Monk: Other Names: Black Belt, Martial Artist, Pugilist, Fighternote If fighter isn't already taken as a class name. Mystic. The Monk enters the frontline like a Fighter, but lacks their heavier equipment, being either bare-fisted warriors who either eschew weapons entirely or use only martial arts weapons like nunchucks and staves while wearing no armour or sticking to lighter armour. Tend to have higher magical stats than other warriors due to their refined bodies and souls, but not enough magic to make this very useful. They often have access to some sort of Ki Manipulations and build up attacks, and sometimes have resistance to magic or certain status effects. Self-sufficiency is what sets them apart from classes relying on fragile magics, higher powers or expensive items. While a core class in a number of Dungeons & Dragons editions, the heavy east Asian influences of the Monk makes it stick out in the usual Medieval European Fantasy setting, leading to this class not being as common as the other classes D&D has inspired. The Monk is more likely to appear in Japanese games, potentially with a Wutal location to justify the class's presence. The Drunken Master. Other Names: Drunken Boxer. Practitioners of a stylised form of zui quan, Drunken Masters are Monk variants that specialize in feints and counterattacks, often having a liberal alcohol consumption gauge that can be depleted to perform feats. This reliance on intoxicants is a curse and a boon, as the drinks can incorporate Alchemist-Style potion buffs, but they will run out sooner or later. The Berserker. Other Names: Grappler. Another variant or specialization of the Monk, the Wrestler is an unnamed combatant that specializes in grabs, throws, and other extreme close-range fighting maneuvers. May trade the Monk's more overtly supernatural abilities for inhuman durability. Despite the straightforward presentation, the Wrestler class inevitably has a bunch of tricky grappling maneuvers that make it deceptively hard to use effectively. The Beast. Other Names: Beastman, Wolfkin, Shifter. The Beast is either a non-human creature, or can turn into one, and fights with their own body in place of weapons. As such, they are generally even less tied to equipment than Monks are. Beasts often lack versatility compared to other classes, but compensate with high stats, high movement speed, and/or terrain-based abilities (either gaining bonuses in certain terrains, moving through rough terrain without being slowed, or just being able to fly over obstacles entirely). Sometimes combined with the Barbarian, Druid, Dragon Knight or Monster Knight; alternately they may possess similar wilderness skills to the Ranger. If a Beast has access to Prestige Classes, they will usually represent a physical metamorphosis or simply getting larger and stronger. The Engineer. Other Names: Tinkerer, Artificer, Machinist, Gadgeteer. Alchemist note the latter when they aren't a separate class, see below. Blacksmith, Mechanic. This is a character class that relies on technology, often of the Steampunk or Magitek variety, to achieve ranged controlling effects similar to a wizard. They most likely have guns and bombs as primary weapons, and employ stationary and/or mobile machines on the battlefield. May be seen as "too sci-fi". The Smith: Other Names: Maker, Crafter, Artisan, Quartermaster An often (though by no means always) less overtly high-tech take on the Engineer archetype, the Smith is a somewhat Boring, but Practical Support Party Member that focuses on maintaining and improving their party's equipment, as well as replenishing consumables and otherwise playing havoc with the game's Item Crafting system. The Mech: Other Names: Mech Jockey, Steam Knight, Pilot. The natural conclusion of the above Engineer, a character that rides around in a Mini-Mecha or on the back of a Clockwork Creature, also typically of the Steampunk or Magitek variety. Compared to the typical Engineer, they tend to be tougher and slower, with powerful physical attacks and large, heavy firearms as well as the usual gadgetry, and can be seen as an equivalent to the Paladin or Spellsworn in that regard. Often possesses a Universal Driver's License, and the ability to turn their ride into an Ace Custom over time. The Cyborg. Other Names: Steamborg, Augmented. A class that takes the synergy of machine and user to eleven, the Cyborg is basically an Unskilled, but Strong Engineer that trades in the Engineer's MacGyvering abilities for straightforward stat-boosting augmentation and a smaller suite of mechanical doodads that can be Cast from Hit Points in a pinch. Typically rare, even in games willing to play around with Magitek. The Alchemist. Other Names: Chemist, Brewer, Herbalist, Merchant, Biochemist, Geneticist, Apothecary. An Alchemist combines items, magic or otherwise, to create potions or bombs to use in battle, often mixing them together during battle. Oddly enough, of all of the classes, they're the ones most likely to be good at throwing things, partly because bombs aren't going to deliver themselves to the Alchemist's enemies. They often are also capable of making supportive items, Health Potion and food being most common. The Gunslinger. Other Names: Sharpshooter. The Gunslinger is the wielder of firearms in a fantasy setting that has them, when guns aren't common enough to be in the hands of regular people (or, if they are in the hands of regular people, the gunslinger tends to use them with much greater effectiveness and panache). Usually functions as a ranged counterpart to the Samurai class, focusing entirely on their weapon of choice and being weak or useless at close range, but may also have some abilities from the Engineer and/or Alchemist (particularly if they build their own guns). Sometimes given a nerf or weakness in order to keep people playing the Ranger class (assuming it isn't merged with the Ranger class) - for instance guns might have lower damage or a slower rate of fire than bows, in exchange for longer range or the ability to pierce armor, or alternatively Gunslingers may lack versatility but have higher attack power or evasion compared to regular Rangers. Gunslinger and Ranger are the only classes likely to have Wild West motifs, though even then, they don't always have them. The Psychic: Other Names: Psion, Mentalist, Esper, Psychokino, Psionist. Psychics generally employ a combination of telepathy and psychokinesis to attack the opponent's mind directly, or to deal damage to his body. Distinctions between psychic powers and magic may be difficult to make. In addition, the list of Psychic Powers potentially available is often seen as too long and generalized. Was generally restricted to science fiction settings before the popularity of X-Men prompted its controversial inclusion in Dungeons & Dragons decades ago, and has appeared only sporadically in other fantasy settings since then. The Beastmaster. Other Names: Pet Master, Puppet Master, Trainer, Puppeteer. Pet Masters specialize in controlling a powerful "pet" to fight by their side. The pet can be anything from a tamed animal to a summoned elemental to a constructed Golem, but usually it serves as a front-line melee combatant while the master hangs back to support it with healing, buffing and long-range attacks. In extreme cases the master does not take part in combat at all. If the pet is an animal then this class is often folded into Ranger or Druid, and comes with the ability to control animals in general. If folded into Summoner then the character might have access to multiple pets, but only be able to use one at a time. Sometimes a Pet Master can ride their pet and function somewhat like a Cavalier, except that the pet does most of the fighting. An MMORPG Pet Master will always have some way of summoning their pet to their position. The Scholar. Other Names: Sage, Librarian, Loremaster, Archivist, Veteran, Wizard. Scholars are a support class with encyclopedic knowledge which allows them to study enemies and figure out their weaknesses. This ranges from simply reading the enemies' stats to actually giving them weaknesses or stripping away their defences. Scholars also have a wide range of other skills, sometimes including unique elements or status conditions which no other class can access, but they're usually weak or impractical outside of narrow situations. Strongly associated with books (magical or otherwise), sometimes to the point of wielding them as weapons. Most Scholars are magic-users (often folded in with the Blue Mage, Bard, Sage, Alchemist or Inquisitor) but Genius Bruiser Fighters and Badass Bookworm Rogues are not unheard of. The Hero. Other Names: Lord, Swordsman, Protagonist. A class usually found in single player RPGs and usually only reserved for the protagonist of their game, with those of this class likely having more plot significant reasons of being a Hero. Capable of combat as a Fighter, though rather than a Mighty Glacier or Stone Wall, will be more a Jack of All Stats, if not a Lightning Bruiser. They may gain some magic, and will almost certainly have unique skills. Almost always uses a sword, and possibly a shield. Sometimes they will have exclusive access to powerful items like the Infinity +1 Sword.Comparing Modern or Sci-Fi classes to Fantasy classes, there are two noticeable differences: Guns are more prominent: In Fantasy, guns either do not appear due to Fantasy Gun Control or only used by specific classes like the Gunslinger or Engineer. But in a more technologically advanced setting, most classes, if not all of them, will likely be packing heat, with even non-combat classes likely to carry a handgun as an Emergency Weapon. The guns may use gunpowder, magnets or be straight up Ray Guns, the effect is the same, shifting the standard range of combat from close quarters combat to line of sight. This doesn't mean there won't be any classes focused on melee combat, just don't expect them to be a common sight on the class roster when they do appear. Technology replaces Magic: What defines Fantasy is magic, with half of character classes in a fantasy game likely defined by their use of Functional Magic. When shifting away from the fantasy genre, now something has to fill the hole that magic once filled, something technology is ready to provide. Healing Hands? The Support has a medkit to patch allies up. Fireballs? Explosives leave a similar bang. Summon Magic? A Techie can set up some turrets or drones. While technology does replace the magic, it does not replace the classes. While the Techie seems like a clear replacement for the Mage on the surface, with weaponry replacing offensive spells, the role of blaster the Mage is famously linked to goes to the better armed Heavy rather than the Techie. Likewise, while it is common for Clerics to be able to damage the undead with healing magic or have magic designed to combat the undead, the Support's tools won't damage the undead like holy magic.Basically, Swords & Sorcery has been replaced with Guns & Gadgets.While these classes can be found in RPGs or Strategy games like Fantasy, thanks to the popularity of Hero Shooters, classes have appeared in both First Person Shooters and Third Person Shooters, though implemented in a different way. In most shooters, a character is most likely defined by their arsenal, with the choice of class deciding what weapons and tools a character has access to, along with stats linked to the class. In games where players switch equipment during gameplay however, now classes are defined by not only how capable they are with each item but abilities outside equipment, with what could be done by an item in some shooters instead an innate ability of the character.The Assault. Other Names: Soldier, Solo. When it comes to frontline combat, no class has more affinity for it than the Assault. With a solid mix of firepower, toughness and speed, they are ready to rush in the middle of a firefight. They gravitate towards weapons built for close to mid-range combat like automatic weapons or shotguns. Variations
The Commando: Other Names: Soldier. Though lacking the raw damage of other Assault classes, the commando makes it up with versatility, being able to adapt to more combat situations other Assaults. This tends makes the Commando one of the easier classes to play, requiring the least tactical mindset. Fitting their status as a generalist, the Commando gravitates towards the assault rifle. In PvE games, a common purpose for the Commando is to take down weaker enemies, particularly in high quantities, allowing their allies to save ammo for stronger enemies. The Brawler. Other Names: Martial Artist, Berserker. While the Assault has an affinity with close combat, the Brawlers are masters of close combat. They quickly take down enemies when they get close up, though they have trouble fighting outside their desired range, meaning taking advantage of the environment is key for a Brawler to prevent being shutdown before they can close the distance. Brawlers favoured weapons are Short Range Shotguns, melee weapons or even their bare hands. The Gunslinger. Other Names: Sharpshooter. Built for accuracy, the Gunslinger's damage stems from precise shots (usually to the head). Due to their accuracy, they tend to be the assault class best built for mid-range combat. Their weapons are as built for precision as they are, going for handguns (likely two) or battle rifles. In shooters, these tend to be one of the trickier classes to play as it requires good accuracy in the middle of a firefight. In turn-based games where players do not manually aim, they get a bonus for "called shots", aiming at particular areas of the body.The Heavy. Other Names: Gunner, Fencer. Armed with heavier weapons such as a minigun or a grenade launcher that pack quite a punch and likely can target multiple enemies at once. However, a Heavy's favoured weapons tend to not only be a bit more specialised, but commonly have a kick of friendly fire, meaning that proper use of their weaponry key to ensure they help rather than hinder their allies. Variations
The Machine Gunner: Armed with a machine gun, likely a minigun, they can shoot a lot of bullets in a short amount of time. Despite how quickly a machine gunner's weapon can fire, they tend to fall under the Mighty Glacier category for a few reasons, namely their weapon may require winding up before firing, takes a long time to reload and slows their movement, especially when fired. Machine gunners tend to have high health to make up for their low speed. The Demolitionist. Other Names: Demoman. For the demolitionist, explosions are an art. They blast enemies and in some games, structures and machines. Their preferred weapon in combat is either the Grenade Launcher or rocket launcher, with a powerful attack mid-range and something long range, but not a weapon for short range, where both the demolitionist and their allies are at risk of friendly fire from the explosions. If all classes have access to explosives, expect the demolitionist to have exclusive explosives like Sticky Bombs or remote controlled explosives. The Pyro. Other Names: Firebug, Flamethrower at hand, the pyro is ready to roast their enemies, as long as they're within their flamethrower's reach anyways. Even if the pyro doesn't immediately kill their enemies, their weapons do Damage Over Time to those who escape the flames, ensure that eventually the fire damage will take them out.The Recon: Other Names: Scout, Ranger. Although capable of dishing out damage, recons are Glass Cannons that not built for a firefight. To make up for this, they use either stealth or speed to ensure they can take out enemies before there's a chance to fight back. As a bonus, they live up to the Recon name by being able to have a look around the map and spot enemy locations without being noticed. Likely to use weapons designed for more indirect combat like a sniper rifle or knife. Variations
The Sniper: Other Names: Sharpshooter. Possessing a weapon that can kill from great distances, snipers can kill enemies without being in viewing distance, usually helped by their weapon(s). As the name implies, snipers usually use Sniper Rifles, though it is not unheard of to see other weapons such as crossbows or hunting rifles used. Shooting at a spot with the right cover is important for a sniper's survival, as their lack of close combat skills means those who sneak up on a sniper will likely win, not to mention rival snipers could shoot them down if a sniper is not careful. The Spy. Other Names: Assassin, Ninja. Knowing how to keep hidden, possessing tools such as disguises or Cloaking Device to ensure they're not spotted. Not wanting to draw attention, the spy favours more quiet weapons such as a knife or silenced pistol. While masters of stealth kills, it is the only type of killing they're good at, with direct confrontations unlikely to end in a spy's favour. The Scout. Other Names: Wing Drive. Masters of maneuverability, the scout is able to go over what would be obstacles to other classes either through innate abilities like Le Parkour or tools such as a Grappling-Hook Pistol. As the scout tends to be a Fragile Speedster, their combat style tends to be based around Hit-and-Run Tactics, rushing in the fight then quickly rushing out before their low defense gets penetrated. The scout usually goes for weapons that can be used in a rush such as a sub-machine gun or a shotgun.The Support. Not built for the offensive, the Support makes it up with tools or abilities to assist their allies. This usually means healing but the support can also reduce or prevent damage, increase their allies damage, or provide supplies. The support's lack of combat ability mixed with the aid they give to their team makes them a prime target for enemies, making it key for their allies to protect them. Variations
The Medic: Other Names: Doctor, Medtech. Healing on legs, this is the class that everyone else rushes to when they're low on health. When there are other classes capable of healing, the medic will still have special benefits such as healing characters past their max health or being able to revive fallen allies. As the name medic implies, they tend to be linked to medicine, likely with the cloth to signal this. The Buffer. Other Names: Officer. While not the best fighters, buffers help their allies become better fighters. Buffers commonly increase the damage of their allies, sometimes also increasing their defense or speed. Usually buffers are of a profession linked to motivation, such as a commanding officer or a musician. The Supplier. As the freight goes on, ammunition will eventually run dry but thankfully, the supplier is ready to give rounds so weapons don't run dry. Some suppliers also give armour and/or explosives as well as ammo.The Techie. Other Names: Engineer, Scientist. The class with an affinity with technology, they know what makes machines work and bring this knowledge to the battlefield. Though not usually built for direct combat, they can use their knowledge with technology to help the direct combatants in their team, sometimes finding ways to use tech to damage the enemy without pulling a trigger. Variations
The Engineer: The engineer builds machines, usually at a ridiculously short amount of time. The most commonly amounts to being The Turret Master, building sentry guns at key points to slow down the enemy, though other machines are possible such as dispensers to heal and supply allies or teleporters to get across the map faster. The Hacker. Other Names: Netrunner, Decker. Getting into enemy technology and either disabling or turning them against their owners, the hacker. In some games, hackers do not enter the frontline with the rest of their group, either staying at a computer or surfing around Cyberspace. The Mechanic. Other Names: Tinkerer. When technology needs fixing, the mechanic is here for repairs, fixing up equipment, machines or vehicles. In some games, mechanics can also modify technology, either improving it or modifying it to fit the current situation.Rarer Classes: With the vast amount of genres that the "Modern" and "Sci-Fi" labels bring in both the terms of a setting and gameplay, some classes will be less universal than others. However, in what genres these classes do appear in, they are a recurring sight.
Rarer Class Archetypes
The Mystic: Other Names: Jedi, Adept. Defined not by weaponry or gadgets, the mystic draws upon the special powers they possess. What type of powers they have varies, though usually is either Psychic Powers, Functional Magic or something similar enough to those two powers. Gameplay-wise, their powers usually amount to being able to blast or disable multiple enemies, but being on the fragile side meaning that Shoot the Mage First is a common response to their presence. As their powers are a thing of Speculative Fiction, this class does not appear in more "realistic" settings. The Psion: Other Names: Psychic, Jedi Consular. Utilising telepathy and/or psychokinesis, the psion's mind is literally a powerful weapon, capable of delivering a telekinetic assault with the objects around them, overload the minds of their enemies or shoot out a Psi Blast. Their psion may be useful in social situations, picking up valuable information from the thoughts of others or using a Jedi Mind Trick to compel their target to help their objective. Most likely to appear in a science fiction setting, though may appear if the setting is a Fantasy Kitchen Sink. The Mage: Other Names: Witch. With their familiarity of the arcane arts, the mage has spells at the ready that could blast their enemies with Elemental Powers, create illusions to trick their opponents or summon spirits for assistance. Their affinity with the supernatural can be useful thanks to their knowledge of arcane entities along with being able to detect them. Found in Urban Fantasy and Science Fantasy settings. The Adept: Other Names: Jedi Guardian. Channelling their powers within their own bodies, the adept is not only more physically capable than other mystics but potentially more physically capable than any normal person could be. As the adept's power is used internally rather than effecting their environment, they're more likely to attack with weapons or unarmed attacks rather than offensive powers. With the adept not being tied to a specific type of power, this class can easily be fitted into various Sci-Fi and Fantasy settings. The Tank: This class has one job, preventing their allies from getting hit. The Tank is so named for their ability to tank damage, with their offensive ability ranging from nonexistent, making them Stone Walls, to decent, though not at the level of dedicated damage dealers. Mechanically, this class is built for games with the Damager, Healer, Tank triangle, most noticeably the Hero Shooter genre. The Shieldbearer: Possessing either a Deflector Shield or Deployable Cover, these guys set up a barrier that protect their allies from projectiles. Usually this barrier will only stop enemy projectiles, with allies being able to fire through the shield, though some barriers stop all projectiles. The barrier is not invincible though, and will break with enough damage. The Bodyguard: To prevent their allies from getting hit, the bodyguard aims to get hit in their place. They do so by making it harder for enemies to escape them in combat or having reaction abilities that make them take the bullet. Naturally as this class takes a lot of hits, they tend to have a lot of health to compensate. The Face: Springing into action when something needs to be solved by diplomacy rather than violence, the Face is The Social Expert of classes. In some games, this class also have contacts to draw upon, using their connections when needed. The Face is designed for games where social interaction with Non Player Characters is important and as such, does not appear in games purely based around combat. The Driver: Other Names: Pilot, Hunter. When you need somebody to operate a vehicle, the Driver is the best choice for the task. What this vehicle is varies, it could be a car, tank, plane, spaceship or Mini-Mecha but whatever it is, the Driver knows how to use it! They are either the only class that can use vehicles or get special bonuses operating them the other classes do not. This class only appears when vehicles are a gameplay feature, with the driver not appearing when all gameplay is on-foot. If you have never played an in-depth tabletop RPG game of something like Dungeons & Dragons, I highly recommend it. Why? Because it allows you to control the tempo of the game and play the way you want to. DnD characters in a fantasy setting can range from your standard human fighter to an Aarakocran bird person. Yes, that's a real thing. If you are a gamer who loves RPGs, JRPGS, or CRPGS, you probably know some character classes basics. However, where do these classes in Final Fantasy, Baldur's Gate, and other series come from? If you're someone who only knows a little about RPG game classes, then we have the ultimate guide to introduce you to your next favorite character class. Let's get some background on RPG classes, skills, abilities, subclasses, and archetypes.
RPG Classes What are the RPG classes' RPG classes are the character frameworks and templates you use when playing a role-playing game. Character classes differentiate characters from one another by wielding different weapons and possessing different skill sets utilized by players. Standard RPG Class Types: Form and Function Whether you are playing something like Final Fantasy X, or World of WarCraft, you have your basic class type. These range from fighters and warriors who specialize in strength and power to wizards and clerics who cast spells. Are you bold and brash? Into heavy combat with swords and axes? Then you might want to be a warrior or barbarian. Or are you someone who likes to hang back and let other players get hit in combat? Cast some spells and invoke religion, and maybe you'd do better as a mage or cleric.
Character Class: History The grandfather of them all, Dungeons and Dragons, was the first to introduce character classes. Ever since its inception, Dungeons and Dragons have influenced nearly every RPG class system that has ever existed. The RPG class system may have shifted over time, particularly with the changing of the basic Dungeons and Dragons tabletop RPG rules. Regardless, the main tactics and skills have remained. Different tabletops RPG and evolving forms of gameplay allowed for creating different variations on classes and gameplay.
Class Archetypes: Unique Skill Sets & Variations Class archetypes are subclasses for characters. These enhance game classes and add flavor to your playing experience. You could have a ranger who also has a ranger archetype of a beastmaster. These open up new skills and make these standard classes even more unique and fun to play. For example, I play as an elf rogue who has an inquisitive archetype. While I can partake in all sorts of things enjoyed by the rogue classes, I can further enhance a role-playing game by acting like a detective. Sure, I like to act like a thief and use my sword to intimidate, but I also love investigating the game setting. Inquisitive turns my elf rogue into a fast-talking, perceptive investigator. If an enemy doesn't give me an answer I like, I'm not afraid to shoot an arrow or throw a knife their way. It all depends on how you play the game. On the other hand, you could choose the assassin archetype. You can see how even in one RPG class, changing your archetype can alter the story's course from game to game.
List: Common Character Archetypes Different archetypes allow players to gain useful skills, powers, and abilities at different levels. For example, at level 3, 7, and 15, the arcane archer gets various unique skills. While there are tons of variations to these character archetypes, we'll list just a few interesting ones to explore. We'll list their basic makeup, along with unique skill sets.
Fighter Archetypes Arcane Archer Arcane archers use their bow proficiency to deal with devastating magical how damage to anyone in their path. Proficiency in arcane or nature Ability: Magic Arrow, Arcane Shot, Curving Shot, and more Battle Master A battle master learns all the different ways to, well, master battle. Combat Superiority Maneuvers: these enhance attacks Know Your Enemy: this allows the player to learn about an enemy or ally outside of combat. Hitpoints, armor class, and class level are things battle masters can see. Champion Champions are all about physical excellence and devastation. This is the perfect archetype for those who want to deal with raw damage. Improved Critical: This improves your chance at landing a devastating critical blow Remarkable Athlete: You get extreme proficiency bonuses to acrobatics and Survivor: You get an impressive addition to hit points during battle if you're on death's doorstep. Knight Knights are chivalrous characters who specialize in combat and protecting allies in the heat of battle. Implacable Mark: When hit, an enemy is marked by you. They'll get a disadvantage on any attack. Hold the Line: This allows the knight to slow enemies by delivering a decisive blow. Defender's Blade: This ability will enable knights to strike back with a vengeance. You can get an attack of opportunity twice, as well as getting AC +1 when wearing heavy armor. Samurai Like their real-world counterparts, samurai in RPG games are hardy warriors who will stop at nothing to conquer foes. Fighting Spirit: Gives you an advantage on all attack rolls and adds five extra hit points. Elegant Courtier: This gives players a massive boost to Charisma Rapid Strike: In certain situations, you can attack a target an additional time per turn Rogue Archetypes Assassin Assassins are hired killers, those who deal in death. They can do it for profit or the art of it. Assassin's Mark: You get the element of surprise, as well as advantage on any creature that hasn't had a turn in combat yet. Infiltration Expertise: You can take time to falsify your identity. This is perfect if you're trying to infiltrate an organization, crime family, or other tightly guarded groups. Impostor: This allows you to mimic a character in nearly every way. Death Strike: If you strike a character who doesn't pass a constitution saving throw, they receive double the damage. Inquisitive These rogues love to learn secrets, expose plots, and solve mysteries. Eye and Ear for Deceit: This allows the rogue to determine if someone is lying or spot hidden creatures and objects. Unerring Eye: You are incredibly perceptive, and almost nothing can get past you. Shapechangers, arcane magic, illusions, and more can't fool you. An eye for Weakness: This gives you insight into the enemy's weaknesses. Scout Scouts are naturals at scouting territory and living in the wilderness. Survivalist: a considerable boost to nature and survival skills Superior Mobility: Higher walking speed Ambush Master: Using your scouting expertise, you're able to get an advantage at the beginning of combat. Swashbuckler Swashbucklers are masters of the blade and the arts of charisma. Duelists and pirates are swashbucklers. Master Duelist: Even if you miss an attack, you can roll again with an advantage. You'll have to have a long rest to do this action again. Fancy Footwork: You strike and slip away from enemies with ease Ranger Archetypes Rangers are masters of the wild, light armor, and bows. Beast Master The beastmaster develops close bonds with beasts. Animal Companion: you bond with a creature from the natural world. Companion's Bond: Further benefits to the beast you bond with Hunter The hunter focuses on combat. They try to thin the herds of enemies from afar with bows. Hunter's Prey: you get an advantage against a specific enemy type. Colossus Slayer for powerful foes. Giant Killer for big foes, and Horde Breaker against multiple creatures per turn. Barbarian Archetypes Barbarians are fearsome warriors that use rage and raw power to defeat foes. Berserker A berserker doubles down on rage and turns it on their foes. Intimidating Presence: This ability allows berserkers to indicate characters and frighten creatures. Frenzy: This allows the berserker to go into a frenzy, enhancing their attack powers Cleric Archetypes Clerics are the medics of the classes. They assist team members during a battle, making sure they're healed up using religion, magic, and more. Life Clerics dealing in life magic heal the sick. Disciple of Life: More effective healing spells Blessed Healer: Your healing spells cast on you as well as a team member Death Clerics of death deal in negative energy and necromancy. Reaper: This allows the player to learn a variety of necromancy spells Inescapable Destruction: Your destructive death spells are more potent and get through enemy defenses. Mage Archetypes Mages, often cloaked in robes and wielding arcane powers, are a staple in RPGs. Renowned for their vast knowledge and spellcasting abilities, they can unleash devastating spells to decimate foes or weave protective enchantments for allies. While their magical prowess is unmatched, mages are typically fragile, with lower physical defenses. This makes them vulnerable in close combat. Strategically positioning themselves and choosing the right spells are crucial for their survival. Pros and Cons
High magical damage
Versatile spellbook
Crowd control abilities
Low physical defense
Reliant on mana
Often requires careful planning
How to Choose Your RPG Class Now that you're a little more knowledgeable in the art of some RPG classes and archetypes, you can get some friends together on a site like Roll20 and get going. Feel free to experiment with the different classes, subclasses, and archetypes. These add a lot of crucial skills to the game, modifying the way action and battle unfold and changing the basics of the game. Choose which RPG class fits your style, and see how it pans out. You always have a chance to spice things up later with subclasses and archetypes. No matter if you choose a paladin, samurai, ninja, berserker, or summoner, they're all part of the enormous repertoire of RPG classes. Who Should You Play As? Assassin For those who love strategy and stealth, the Assassin archetype beckons. Dive into the shadows, plan meticulously, and strike with lethal precision. This role is perfect for players who enjoy moral dilemmas and the thrill of the hunt. With the Assassin, every battle becomes a game of cat and mouse, and the satisfaction of a well-executed plan is unparalleled. Embrace the dark allure and become the silent force that shapes the game's narrative. Inquisitive Ideal for the observant and curious, the Inquisitive excels in detection and deception. Dive deep into mysteries, spot hidden threats, and become the party's detective. While rich in investigative prowess, its combat abilities might feel underwhelming. The true joy? Unraveling enigmas and seeing through illusions, offering a nuanced, cerebral gameplay experience. Scout For those with a sharp instinct and love for the wild, the Scout is a perfect fit. Excel in stealth, navigate terrains with ease, and always keep your party ahead. Relish in the thrill of ambushing foes, blending into nature, and being the group's vigilant eyes and ears. Dive into a gameplay filled with strategy and unpredictability. Swashbuckler For those drawn to flair and finesse, Swashbuckler Archetype offers diverse combat styles, from stealthy infiltrators to gun-wielding duellists. Ideal for players seeking a blend of elegance and agility, these archetypes promise dynamic combat experiences. The thrill? Mastering unique abilities, whether it's throwing daggers with precision, wielding rapiers with grace, or maintaining secret identities, ensuring every battle is both strategic and theatrical. Mage For those who revel in strategy and deception, the Maze archetype is a captivating choice. Perfect for players who enjoy manipulating the battlefield, leading foes into intricate traps, and relishing their disarray. The true joy? Outsmarting opponents with every twist and turn, ensuring a gameplay experience filled with unpredictability and cunning tactics. Dive into the challenge and master the maze. Sources A graduate of Penn State University and a Philadelphia native, Bryan has been a gamer since day one. Using his vast experience of gaming, game culture, and all things tech, Bryan aims to deliver the most up-to-date and captivating game design content to readers.