Building the Perfect Class

Constructing new character forms from old OD&D substance

By Erin D. Smale

Introduction

There's a lot to be said for the simple playability of the official Dungeons & Dragons guidelines. Indeed, to many OD&D players, the "rules-lite" approach is the game's greatest strength. It rapidly handles action in the game. It leads players up a gentle learning curve. It heartily encourages DMs to tinker and fiddle about as they customise their own campaigns.

But this approach can be a curse as well as a blessing, for in promoting playability, game realism can sometimes suffer. Character classes are an example of this, and it is virtually assured that every OD&D player will, at some point, decide that the classes offered in the official rules are either insufficient for their needs or unrealistic within the context of the game. In fact, I'll wager that you're reading this article precisely because, at sometime in your OD&D career, you have entertained one or both of these thoughts yourself. [1]

Welcome to the club.

Unfortunately, the OD&D rules supply little instruction in the area of class-building, and most "new" classes are inconsistently crafted as a result; ultimately, these constructs can spell disaster for the campaign as a whole. What's wrong with them? Not the concepts that drove their creation. Certainly not a lack of ability possessed by their creators. It's simply a problem of imbalance between class abilities and required experience points (XP).

Too many abilities for too little XP results in a runaway class that gets too powerful with respect to its "official" peers. Before long, such characters undeservedly occupy a dominant position within the campaign, and all sorts of problems—for the other players, the DM, and the campaign—sprout up. On the opposite end of the spectrum, too few abilities for too many XP results in a class that makes little sense to play—it's like spending $10.00 for a 100MB Zip disk when you could buy a 650MB CD-R for 50 cents.

A nice maxim for OD&D character classes, then, is that you get what you pay for (in terms of XP, at least). Well and good, but if you're like me (read: anal retentive), you naturally expect the correspondence between class abilities and XP requirements to be reasonable and consistent: powerful abilities require more XP, but the price should be fair, and it should apply equally to all classes in the game.

With that in mind, you'll shudder after a quick look at the Level Advancement tables in the RC[2], which don't exactly reinforce this expectation. Indeed, one wonders by exactly what process each class' XP requirements were determined.

Take the base XP values for clerics and thieves, for example. A cleric's base XP—required to earn 2nd-level—is 1,500 XP. A thief's base XP is 1,200 XP. Clearly, clerics are more powerful, but the implication is that the abilities that make them more powerful cost precisely 300 XP. A comparison of the two class' abilities should bear this out.

To begin, clerics can cast spells; thieves cannot. Then we note that clerics can turn undead, while thieves practice a set of eight very mundane skills. Clerics have more hit points than thieves. Weapon selection for both classes is restricted, but clerics may wear any armour desired while thieves are limited to leather. Logically, then, spell ability, turning undead, higher hit dice, and unrestricted armour selection is worth 300 XP.

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[1] If I'm right, you owe me a pint of Guinness; IOU vouchers may be sent to esmale@welshpiper.com. If I'm wrong, let me know where I need to send your pint. Cheers!

[2] *Rules Cyclopedia,* 1991, TSR, Inc.

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A closer look at thief abilities challenges this, however. Thieves have the read languages ability, which essentially translates as guaranteed comprehension of 80% of the languages the thief *doesn't* really know. The thief can cast spells from scrolls, and while exercising this ability has a 10% chance of backfiring, the thief does get to wield magic-user spells (arguably more powerful than clerical magic) without the worry of learning them, memorising them, or lugging about heavy spellbooks. And, while thieves are likely to suffer from their lowly d4 hit dice, they do have better saving throws than clerics.

Maybe these talents don't put the thief above the cleric, but one wonders if a 300 XP gap is sufficient to account for the cleric's supposed superiority. Given the abilities above, is the cleric indeed a superior class? For the anal retentive DM, who wants numbers to have meaning and consistency, the question is more precise: if each ability had a numeric XP value and the abilities of each class were summed, would the cleric's total be precisely 300 more than that of the thief?

With the cleric-thief example in mind, consider the fighter, the halfling, and the mystic, all of which require 2,000 XP to advance to 2nd-level. The implication is that each is equally powerful, or, more accurately, that each is equally capable. What of the dwarf, who trails the mighty magic-user by only 300 XP? What terrifying and stupendous abilities are at the disposal of the lofty elf, whose base XP is a whopping 4,000 XP?

As if these questions, weighted as they are, weren't enough, what about the actual level advancement tables? Few tables increment the base XP values through the exact same logarithmic progression beyond 7th- or even 5th-level, and past name level, exponential XP accumulation gives way to an arithmetic sequence. Why the variation? How is this justified?

Given the above, I'm forced to consider the possibility[3] that any consistency within the current XP requirements for class advancement is purely accidental. Yet in a game replete with progressive combat matrices and carefully crafted modifiers that take advantage of the well-known bell curves that die rolls can produce, I cannot—I won't—believe that the nerdy, number-crunching designers responsible for the OD&D game didn't establish class XP requirements without ensuring some measure of XP-related consistency between the classes.

Hence this article, which examines the relationship between experience points, class abilities, and level advancement. In *Part I, Experience by the Numbers,* I'll demonstrate the precise numeric correspondence between class abilities and XP, as used by the existing classes in the official OD&D rules. In the *Part II, The Class Construction Kit,* I'll show how this correspondence can be leveraged to create new and consistently capable classes in any OD&D game.

Part I: Experience by the Numbers

A number-crunching look at character class experience point requirements

Before moving ahead to the actual construction of new classes, it is essential that we understand the building blocks of those that exist. These building blocks consist of class abilities—characteristics of and talents available to each class—and the experience points they cost. Interestingly (and my Introduction notwithstanding), while the classes presented in the core rules seem inconsistently fashioned, there *actually exists* a discernable pattern to their respective XP requirements (or, at least, I managed to contrive such during the course of my research).

That said, I cannot say with any certainty that my interpretation of the relationship between class abilities and XP requirements is congruent with the vision held by the game designers (I suspect that it is not—otherwise, the results of my informal research would seem akin to someone decrypting the OD&D equivalent of the Enigma cipher with an Ovaltine decoder ring). Nevertheless, the consistent pattern that resulted is used here as a starting point for justifying the base experience point values possessed by the various classes.

[3] Possibility, mind you.

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Finally, it must be stressed that (tempting though it was), I did not alter, add, or remove any ability of any existing, official OD&D class—to do so would have adulterated the goal of this piece: to present a method for creating new classes in a manner consistent with those extant in the game.

Class Abilities

To discern the precise relationship between class abilities and experience point values, it is first necessary to codify what abilities exist. For our purposes, all class abilities are divided into 12 distinct categories:

- Hit Dice: the die type used to generate the class' hit points
- Saving Throw: the chart used to determine saving throw values (RC/109)
- Combat Progression: the combat matrix used to determine "to-hit" values (RC/106-7)
- Armour Restriction: the types of armour allowed to the class
- Weapon Restriction: the types of weapons allowed to the class
- Spell Ability: the class' spell-casting ability
- Special I: a roster of low-impact abilities granted to the class
- Special II: a roster of high-impact abilities granted to the class
- Weapon Mastery: the weapon mastery of the class (RC/75)
- Skills: a roster of talents similar to general skills granted to the class
- Race Abilities: abilities granted as a function of character race
- Level Limit: whether the class' level progression is limited or unlimited

Within each of these categories is a set attribute or number of attributes; each attribute costs a certain amount of XP, which contributes to the class' base experience point value. As expected, the more advantageous these attributes are, the higher the class' base XP value. Within each category, the worst or least advantageous selection was assigned a value of naught (there are two exceptions to this, described below). Beyond the nil value, the XP costs progress arithmetically in increments of 100.

As mentioned above, the abilities of each class have not been altered from those found in the *Rules Cyclopedia*. With one notable exception (explained below), the base XP values derived precisely match those found in this volume (RC/14-29). In the following sections, each ability category is cited with its appropriate attributes and corresponding XP cost; the summed cost of the XP within each category determines the class' base experience point value.

Hit Dice

A class' hit die determines hit points; the higher the die, the more hit points possible. The XP values for each hit die are shown on **Table 1:**

Table 1: Hit Dice

Die Type	XP Cost
d4	0
d6	100
d8	200
d10	300
d12	400

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Explanation of Results:

The worst hit die type for a character class is d4, hence its null value. Under official rules, the highest hit dice type is a d8; XP costs for hit die of d10 or d12 have been extrapolated accordingly.

Saving Throws

The matrix upon which the class saves costs experience points as follows:

Table 2: Saving Throws

Saving Throw Matrix	XP Cost
Cleric	300
Dwarf	400
Elf	200
Fighter	0
Halfling	400
Magic-User	100
Thief	100

Explanation of Results:

The XP values cited on **Table 2** represent the quality of each class' overall saving throw values. These figures take into account neither a class' benefits against a particular attack type nor its level progression as shown on RC/109. It is interesting to note, then, the equality of saving throw values for magic-users and thieves, as well as the relatively poor saving throws for elves.

Combat Progression

The combat ability of each class is shown on the combat matrices (RC/106-7). For our purposes, the smaller the level gap between "to-hit" progressions for a given armour class, the better the class is at fighting:

Table 3: Combat Progression

Class Fights as a	XP Cost
Cleric/Thief	100
Demi-human	300
Fighter	200
Magic-User	0
Monster	400

Explanation of Results:

Not surprisingly, magic-users possess the worst combat capability, gaining +2 "to-hit" every 5 levels. Clerics and thieves edge out a bit better, with an additional +2 "to-hit" every 4 levels, while fighters gain +2 "to-hit" every 3 levels. Demi-human classes (dwarf, elf, and Halfling) are rather mixed in their ability; up to their Name level, they attack as fighters. Beyond that, however, they use attack ranks, which grant attack capability on par with that of monsters (i.e., +1 "to-hit" every level). Note that combat progression as a monster is not available to characters under the official rules; the value cited on **Table 3** is extrapolated from the other figures.

Armour Restriction

The armour restrictions under which each class must abide are valued as follows:

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Table 4: Armour Restriction

Armour Allowed	XP Cost
Any	200
None	0
Restricted	100

Explanation of Results:

Two classes under the official rules are proscribed from wearing armour: magic-users and mystics; since this tends to reduce their early survivability, the prohibition of armour is given a value of naught. Those allowed only certain types of armour (e.g., thieves) fall into the Restricted category, which consists of any armour requirement between no armour at all and any armour desired. In the case where no armour restriction exists, the XP cost is highest, at 200 XP.

Weapon Restriction

Restrictions on weapons available to the class are valued as follows:

Table 5: Weapon Restriction

Weapons Allowed	XP Cost
Any	200
None	-100
Restricted	0

Explanation of Results:

Even the most limited classes are permitted some weapon use (e.g., a magic-user can wield a dagger, a cleric is limited to non-edged weapons, and a halfling is allowed only small-sized armaments). Because this is the least advantageous option in the official rules, the XP value is set to nil. By contrast, those with no weapon restrictions pay the most in XP. If the character is prohibited from using any weapons at all, the XP cost is negative; while certainly unusual, this option might be appropriate for some monastic-like class which, while capable of defending itself via martial arts, is prohibited from using an actual weapon of any sort.

Spell Ability

The spell-casting ability of the class impacts its base experience point value as follows:

Table 6: Spell Ability

Cast Spells as a	XP Cost
Cleric	500
Cleric (1/2)	300
Cleric (1/3)	200
Cleric (1/4)	100
Magic-User	1500
Magic-User (1/2)	800
Magic-User (1/3)	500
Magic-User (1/4)	400
None	0

Explanation of Results:

As expected, those with no spell-casting ability pay zero XP in this category. Clerical magic, generally inferior to that of magic-users, has a cost of 500 XP. Magic-user magic imposes the

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significant cost of 1,500 XP.[4] These costs include the ability to fashion enchanted items using the guidelines on RC/250.

Table 6 entries with fractions indicate limited spell-casting ability (i.e., inferior to that of a full cleric or magic-user). The fraction shown can be interpreted in one of two ways.[5] The first interpretation is that the fraction designates the level at which the class casts spells. For example, Magic-user (1/2) means that the class casts spells as a magic-user of one-half the current level (e.g., at 4th-level, the class casts spells as a 2nd-level magic-user). Cleric (1/3), for example, means that the class casts clerical magic at one-third the current level (e.g., at 7th-level, it casts spells as a 2nd-level cleric). In all such cases, round fractions down to the lowest, whole level value.

The second interpretation allows normal casting at the current level, but restricts the amount of available spells by the fraction shown. For example, Magic-User (1/4) would grant spell-casting ability as a magic-user of the same level, but limit the available spells to one-quarter of the normal amount (i.e., three spells of each level instead of the normal 13, as shown on RC/34).

Special I and Special II

Special abilities distinguish classes from each other, and they comprise all specialised talents outside the purview of spell-casting ability and race-based characteristics. While some special abilities are not usable until earning a certain experience level, all contribute to the class' base XP cost. For our purposes, special abilities are as follows:

Special I:

- Backstabbing (RC/23)
- Fighter Combat Options (RC/104)
- Lance Attack (RC/104)
- Martial Arts (RC/30)
- Use Spell Scrolls (RC/23)[6]
- Set Spear vs. Charge (RC/104)

Special II:

- Cast magic-user spells in armour
- Increased movement as a function of level (RC/30)
- Incremental AC bonus as a function of level (RC/29)
- Inherent Spell-casting (total spell level divided by three)[7]
- Mystic class abilities (RC/31)
- Turn Undead (RC/14-5)

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[4] I feel this value to be disproportionately high in comparison to clerical magic, but this is where the figure shook out during my research. I suppose the cost might be justified in view of the fact that magic-user spells tend to be more useful offensively and affect more targets per casting than clerical spells. Regardless, the impact this figure has on the magic-user and elf classes suggests to me that it not be altered.

[5] I personally favour the first interpretation for reasons of game balance. However, individual DMs must decide which is best suited for their campaigns. The only advice offered in this respect is to be consistent by choosing one or the other.

[6] This ability does not apply to Magic-Users, and is assumed as part of their ability to cast magic-user spells.

[7] This is the automatic or "at-will" ability to loose spells; every 3 spell levels (round up) counts as a single special ability (e.g., a 4th-level spell counts as 2 Special II abilities, or 500 XP). This ability does not apply to spells or spell-like abilities inherent to racial type (q.v., Skills and Race Abilities, below) and is included to create specialised classes that may be imbued with imbued with automatic spell-casting ability as a consequence of their profession.

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Table 7: Special Abilities I and II

Number of Special Abilities	Special I XP Cost	Special II XP Cost
0	0	0
1	200	300
2	400	500
3	600	700
4	800	900
5	1000	1100
6	1200	1300
7	1400	1500
8	1600	1700
9	1800	1900
10	2000	2100

Explanation of Results:

Abilities within the **Special I** category are often shared by multiple classes within the game (e.g., fighters and all demi-humans possess the Fighter Combat Options). **Special II** category abilities typically represent some talent unique to the class in question, though there is no reason why **Special II** abilities might not be used in the generation of new (and *carefully* thought out) classes. Note that all mystic abilities are rated at the level progression shown on RC/31; alteration of this advancement is not recommended. The DM may add abilities in either category, but must judge, using the general criteria above, if such are **Special I** or **Special II** in terms of relative power.

Weapon Mastery

A character's acumen with weapons influences base XP value; the categories are:

- Demi-human (all weapons at Basic Mastery at 1st-level, with +1 choice per 4 levels and +1 choice for every 200,000 XP above maximum level)
- Fighter (4 weapon choices at 1st-level, with +1 chose per 3 levels and one extra choice at levels 19, 27, and 33)
- Normal (2 weapon choices at 1st-level, with +1 choice per 3 levels)

Table 8: Weapon Mastery

Weapon Mastery as	XP Cost
Demi-human	200
Fighter	600
Normal	0

Explanation of Results:

This category assumes that weapon mastery (RC/75) is used in the game; if this is not the case, a blanket 400 XP should be assigned to the class' base XP cost. Otherwise, use the values above, noting that those classes with no especial weapon talent pay nothing for their ability. Fighters, because they begin play with a high number of weapon choices, and gain additional weapon choices at high level, pay the most for weapon mastery. Demi-humans fall somewhere in the middle, as they begin the game with Basic Mastery in all weapons (RC/75), but gain additional weapon choices at a slower rate than others.

Skills and Race Abilities

Such abilities are essentially general skills granted automatically as a function of class, though some represent abilities granted by virtue of racial stock. These include:

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Skills:

- Acrobatics (as the Mystic ability (RC/30) or general skill (RC/82))[8]
- Thieving abilities (climb walls, open locks, find traps, hear noise, hide in shadows, move silently, pick pockets, and remove traps). Consider every two such talents as a single skill on **Table 9,** below (round up)
- Read normal languages (as thief (RC/23))
- Speak/Read language (includes languages granted as a function of race; consider every two languages as a single skill on **Table 9,** below (round up))

Race Abilities:

- Attack Bonus vs. certain attacks (as Halfling, RC/26)
- Defence Bonus vs. certain attacks (as Halfling, RC/26)
- Detection (as Dwarves underground (RC/24) or Elves and secret doors (RC/25))
- Hide (indoors, as Halfling; RC/27)
- Hide (outdoors, as Halfling; RC/27)
- Infravision (to any range, as Dwarves (RC/24) or Elves (RC/25))
- Initiative Bonus (as Halfing, RC/26)
- Saving Throw Bonus (as Dwarves vs. spells (RC/23) or Elves vs. breath weapon (RC/25); consider every two such bonuses as a single ability on **Table 9,** below (round up))
- Special Attack (RC/153-4)
- Special Defence (RC/155)

Table 9: Skills and Race Abilities

Number of Skills and Race Abilities	Skills XP Cost	Race Abilities XP Cost
0	0	0
1	100	100
2	200	200
3	300	300
4	400	400
5	500	500
6	600	600
7	700	700
8	800	800
9	900	900
10	1000	1000

Explanation of Results:

As a rule, any mundane talent (read: non-magical) not included within the **Special I** or **Special II** categories is considered a skill or race ability. Note that thief skills and languages are granted on a two-for-one basis, meaning that every two thief skills or every two languages are counted as a single skill (thief skills and languages are, for purposes of XP cost calculation, considered separate categories and may not be combined). Any other general skill granted to the class is done so on a one-for-one basis (e.g., if the Tracking skill were granted, it would cost 100 XP).

[8] I suggest the latter, as the Mystic's acrobatics ability is handled differently from other general skills.

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Level Limit

The class' ability to advance in level impacts XP cost as follows:

Table 10: Level Limit

Maximum Level is	XP Cost
Name Level	-200
Unlimited	0

Explanation of Results:

Under the official rules, only demi-humans suffer level limitations[9], but the significant number of talents at their disposal offset any supposed disadvantage thus imposed.[10] All other characters, however, may advance to 36th-level. As a result, I've determined unlimited level advancement to be the norm and assigned it an XP cost of nil; if the class' level advancement is limited, the XP cost is negative, as shown above.

Applying the Values

A proof of XP cost consistency

Tedious as it may seem, this section steps through the abilities of the classes extant within the official rules. More than anything, the exercise should demonstrate the precision of the XP costs cited above.

Before reviewing classes individually, consult **Table 11** for an overview of how the XP costs above compare to the base XP requirements cited in the *Rules Cyclopedia:*

Table 11: Skills and Race Abilities[11]

Class	Base XP (from above)	Base XP (from *RC*)	Difference
Cleric	1500	1500	0
Fighter	2000	2000	0
Magic-User	1600	2500	(900)
Thief	1200	1200	0
Dwarf	2200	2200	0
Elf	4000	4000	0
Halfling	2000	2000	0
Mystic	2000	2000	0

As shown, the XP costs on **Table 11** balance out for all classes except the magic-user (the "notable exception" I mentioned earlier; more on this below). A breakdown of each class follows:

[9] Mystics are the human exception, limited to 16th-level (seven levels beyond so-called "Name Level").

[10] It has always baffled me as to why, given their longer life spans, demi-humans suffer level advancement restrictions. Clearly, this is a contrivance to maintain game balance, but it makes precious little sense within the fantasy context of the typical OD&D campaign world. While this is an excellent subject for debate elsewhere, suffice to say that the convention does seem to have an effect on demi-human class XP requirements, since the XP costs cited above fit precisely into the figures given in the *Rules Cyclopedia.*

[11] The Druid class is absent, perhaps conspicuously so. This is because, under the official rules, druids begin their careers as 9th-level or greater clerics, at which time they learn new spells, eschew metallic armament, and apparently forget—suddenly—how to turn undead. Because the druid advances as a cleric of equal level, I have not bothered to determine base XP value under the official rules. Instead, we'll start a druid from scratch in Part II of this piece (q.v.).

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Table 11a: Cleric (*RC*/13-6)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Cleric	300	300
Combat Progression	Cleric/Thief	100	100
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	Cleric	500	500
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Turn Undead	300	300
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Nil	0	0
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	1500
		RC Base XP Cost	1500
		Difference	0

Table 11b: Fighter (*RC*/16-9)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d8	200	200
Saving Throw	Fighter	0	0
Combat Progression	Fighter	200	200
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Any	200	200
Spell Ability	Nil	0	0
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Lance Attack	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	600
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Fighter	600	600
Skills	Nil	0	0
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	2000
		RC Base XP Cost	2000
		Difference	0

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Table 11c: Magic-User (*RC*/19-21)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d4	0	0
Saving Throw	Magic-User	100	100
Combat Progression	Magic-User	0	0
Armour Restriction	None	0	0
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	Magic-User	1500	1500
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Nil	0	0
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	1600
		RC Base XP Cost	2500
		Difference	-900[12]

Table 11d: Thief (*RC*/21-3)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d4	0	0
Saving Throw	Thief	100	100
Combat Progression	Cleric/Thief	100	100
Armour Restriction	Restricted	100	100
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Backstab	200	
	Use Spell Scrolls	200	400
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Climb Walls, Open Locks Find Traps, Hear Noise, Hide in Shadows, Move Silently, Pick Pockets, Remove Traps	400	
	Read Languages	100	500
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	1200
		RC Base XP Cost	1200
		Difference	0

[12] The Magic-User is the only class whose base XP cost did not match that cited in the *Rules Cyclopedia.* However, the class' abilities, broken down as shown on Table 11c, make it clear that the only remarkable quality of the magic-user is his capacity to cast magic spells. In exchange, the class suffers the worst (or near-worst) attribute in every other category: low hit dice, minimal combat ability, extreme armaments restrictions, no skills, poor saving throws, and no special abilities. There are three ways to deal with this disparity: 1) keep the magic-user's abilities as they are, but reduce the base XP to the value shown; 2) upgrade certain attributes (an example is given in Part II of this piece); or 3) leave it as is, somehow rationalising the cost of the extra 900 XP. (I have to admit that this confirms my long-standing opinion the magic-user is unbalanced with respect to the other official classes, and that all those players who groused and complained about the magic-user's lack of armour, lack of weapons, low hit points, and role as a "one-charge" magic item at 1st-level were *absolutely correct*.)

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Table 11e: Dwarf (*RC*/23-5)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d8	200	200
Saving Throw	Dwarf	400	400
Combat Progression	Demi-human	300	300
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Lance Attack	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	600
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Demi-human	200	200
Skills	Lang. (dwarf, gnome)	100	
	Lang. (goblin, kobold)	100	200
Race Abilities	Detection (underground)	100	
	Infravision	100	
	Save vs. Spells bonus	100	300
Level Limit	Name Level	-200	-200
		Total Base XP Cost	2200
		RC Base XP Cost	2200
		Difference	0

Table 11f: Elf (*RC*/25-6)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Elf	200	200
Combat Progression	Demi-human	300	300
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Any	200	200
Spell Ability	Magic-User	1500	1500
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Lance Attack	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	600
Special II	Cast Magic Spells in Armour	300	300
Weapon Mastery	Demi-human	200	200
Skills	Lang. (elf, gnoll)	100	
	Lang. (hobgoblin, orc)	100	200
Race Abilities	Detection (secret doors)	100	
	Infravision	100	
	Immune to ghoul paralysis		
	Save vs. Dragon Breath bonus	100	400
Level Limit	Name Level	(200)	(200)
		Total Base XP Cost	4000
		RC Base XP Cost	4000
		Difference	0

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Table 11g: Halfling (*RC*/26-7)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Halfling	400	400
Combat Progression	Demi-human	300	300
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	400
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Demi-human	200	200
Skills	Nil	0	0
Race Abilities	Attack Bonus	100	
	Defence Bonus	100	
	Hide (indoors)	100	
	Hide (outdoors)	100	
	Initiative Bonus	100	
	Save vs. Spells/Dragon Breath bonus	100	600
Level Limit	Name Level	(200)	(200)
		Total Base XP Cost	2000
		RC Base XP Cost	2000
		Difference	0

Table 11h: Mystic (*RC*/29-31)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Fighter	0	0
Combat Progression	Fighter	200	200
Armour Restriction	None	0	0
Weapon Restriction	Any	200	200
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Martial Arts	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	600
Special II	Increased Movement	300	
	Incremental AC Bonus	200	
	Mystic Abilities	200	700
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Find Traps, Remove Traps, Move Silently, Climb Walls, Hide in Shadows	300	
	Acrobatics	100	400
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Name Level (16th)	(200)	(200)
		Total Base XP Cost	2000
		RC Base XP Cost	2000
		Difference	0

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Part II: The Class Construction Kit

Using consistent XP values to build consistent character classes

In Part I, we reviewed the XP costs for individual class abilities. Armed with that knowledge, the enterprising DM can create and introduce new classes into his campaign with the confidence that he's struck a consistent balance between class ability and base XP. The beauty of this system is that new classes are not only consistent with each other, but also comparable to the official OD&D classes as presented in the *Rules Cyclopedia.*

The process of creating a new class is easy: simply determine the new class' attribute in each of the 12 categories and sum the corresponding XP costs. The final result is the new class' base XP value, which can then be applied to the generic level advancement table offered below (q.v.).

Race vs. Class

Under the official rules, class and race are essentially synonymous. The class creation system modelled in this article changes that by designating an XP cost for the race's natural attributes. Thus, if the DM desired a dwarf cleric or a halfling thief, for example, he could simply combine the class and race abilities to determine the new class' base XP value. Examples are shown below.

New Class Examples

What follows are a few sample classes built with the abilities and XP costs from Part I. The class descriptions are cursory and serve only as a foundation for the abilities and attributes chosen; DMs may need to elaborate on some details before introducing new classes into their campaigns. Note that no consideration has been made for class prime requisites.

Coenobite

Coenobites are masters of physical and mental discipline who congregate in monastic orders. These orders are highly regimented by alignment and sex, so each order is comprised of coenobites of identical alignment and gender (e.g., Lawful males, Neutral females, Chaotic females, etc.). All coenobites seek total self-discipline as the pinnacle of existence; to a one, they are highly fit, both mentally and physically. The goals of each coenobite order are rarely known or understood by non-members.

Table 12: Coenobite

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d8	200	200
Saving Throw	Cleric	300	300
Combat Progression	Cleric/Thief	100	100
Armour Restriction	None	0	0
Weapon Restriction	None	-100	-100
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Martial Arts	200	400
Special II	Increased Movement	300	
	Incremental AC Bonus	200	
	Mystic Abilities	200	700
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Acrobatics	100	
	Mysticism	100	200
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	1800

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Druid

The druid is a specialised cleric who worships a nature-oriented immortal. As such, each druid takes it upon himself to act as the custodian of a particular wilderness area. Because druids embrace and promote the Natural balance of the multiverse, they are absolutely Neutral in alignment, neither helping nor hindering the normal activities of Chaotic and Lawful beings (unless such activities threaten the well being of their wilderness home). Attuned to nature as they are, Druids eschew any tool or device made from material that don't appear naturally, and thus prefer armaments made from wood, leather, or stone. Druids cast spells as clerics, but have at their disposal a number of spells specially suited to their natural bent (cited as Druidic spells, RC/41). Unlike normal clerics, however, druids have no power over the undead.

Table 13: Druid

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Cleric	300	300
Combat Progression	Cleric/Thief	100	100
Armour Restriction	Restricted	100	100
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	Cleric	500	500
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Healing	100	
	Hunting	100	
	Lang. (elf, sylvan)	100	
	Nature Lore	100	
	Survival	100	500
Race Abilities	Nil	0	0
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	1600

Dwarven Cleric

As the class name implies, this is a cleric of dwarven stock, whose non-secular ministry is to dwarves as that of "normal" clerics is to humans.

Table 14: Dwarven Cleric

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d8	200	200
Saving Throw	Dwarf	400	400
Combat Progression	Demi-human	300	300
Armour Restriction	Any	200	200
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	Cleric (1/2)	300	300
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Turn Undead	300	300
Weapon Mastery	Demi-human	200	200
Skills	Lang. (dwarf, gnome)	100	
	Lang. (goblin, kobold)	100	200
Race Abilities	Detection (underground)	100	
	Infravision	100	
	Save vs. Spells bonus	100	300
Level Limit	Name Level	-200	-200
		Total Base XP Cost	2200

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Halfling Thief

This is the proverbial halfling thief, small, dextrous, and sneaky.

Table 15: Halfling Thief

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d6	100	100
Saving Throw	Halfling	400	400
Combat Progression	Demi-human	300	300
Armour Restriction	Restricted	100	100
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	None	0	0
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Demi-human	200	200
Skills	Climb Walls, Open Locks		
	Find Traps, Hear Noise,		
	Move Silently, Pick		
	Pockets, Remove Traps	400	
	Read Languages	100	500
Race Abilities	Attack Bonus	100	
	Defence Bonus	100	
	Hide (indoors)	100	
	Hide (outdoors)	100	
	Initiative Bonus	100	
	Save vs. Spells/Dragon		
	Breath bonus	100	600
Level Limit	Name Level	-200	-200
		Total Base XP Cost	2000

Magic-User (improved)

Part I illustrated the apparent imbalance of the Magic-User class relative to the other official classes; the modifications below augment the class' abilities to justify the official base XP cost of 2500. The Detection ability allows the character to detect magical energy or spell-casting activity within 10'/level (2/6 chance); the Save vs. Spells bonus is identical to that of dwarves (q.v.).

Table 16: Magic-User (improved)

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	d4	0	0
Saving Throw	Cleric	300	300
Combat Progression	Magic-User	0	0
Armour Restriction	None	0	0
Weapon Restriction	Any	200	200
Spell Ability	Magic-User	1500	1500
Special I	Nil	0	0
Special II	Nil	0	0
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Knowledge	100	
	Magical Engineering	100	
	Planar Geography	100	300
Race Abilities	Detection	100	
	Save vs. Spells Bonus	100	200
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	2500

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Warden

The warden, also known as a ranger, is a fighter whose skills are specially adapted to the wilderness. All wardens have a preferred terrain type (e.g., forest, jungle, swamp, mountains, hills, desert, tundra, et. al.), and, like druids, they typically establish themselves as custodians of a particular stretch of wilderness. Also like druids, wardens must be of Neutral alignment, given their affinity toward nature and the natural balance of the multiverse. Wardens prefer light armour that does not restrict mobility or stealth; in game terms, only leather armour is permitted (no shield). The only weapons permitted are: axe, sword (any type), spear, dagger, bow (any type except crossbow), and sling. The warden's attack bonus pertains to a single monster type as shown on RC/155-6); the type must be selected at 1st-level, and the warden gains +1 "to-hit" and damage against foes of the type chosen. Finally, the warden's spell-casting ability requires him to keep a spellbook as would a normal magic-user.

Table 17: Warden

Category	Attribute	Sub-total	Category Total
Hit Dice	D6	100	100
Saving Throw	Magic-User	100	100
Combat Progression	Cleric/Thief	100	100
Armour Restriction	Restricted	100	100
Weapon Restriction	Restricted	0	0
Spell Ability	Magic-User (1/4)	400	400
Special I	Backstab	200	
	Fighter Combat Options	200	
	Set Spear vs. Charge	200	600
Special II	Cast Magic Spells in Armour	300	300
Weapon Mastery	Non-fighter	0	0
Skills	Hunting	100	
	Lang. (elf, humanoid)	100	
	Nature Lore	100	
	Snares	100	
	Survival	100	
	Tracking	100	600
Race Abilities	Attack Bonus	100	
	Hide Outdoors	100	200
Level Limit	Unlimited	0	0
		Total Base XP Cost	2500

Determining Level Advancement Requirements

Once the base XP cost is determined, it's time to generate the class' level advancement table. In the official rules, few advancement tables follow the exact same XP progression. To normalise the advancement table creation process, we'll generalise with three basic progressions: one for clerics, one for fighters and thieves, and one for magic-users. These progressions are illustrated on **Table 18,** below. Use the progression that most closely matches the "type" or "feel" of the class created. For example, the warden, above, is predominately a fighter, so the fighter XP progression is suggested; the dwarven cleric is most accurately a cleric, so the cleric XP progression is used.

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Table 18: Generic Level Advancement Tables

Level	XP (Clerics)	XP (Fighters, Thieves)	XP (Magic-Users)
1	0	0	0
2	Base XP * 1	Base XP * 1	Base XP * 1
3	Level 2 * 2	Level 2 * 2	Level 2 * 2
4	Level 3 * 2	Level 3 * 2	Level 3 * 2
5	Level 4 * 2	Level 4 * 2	Level 4 * 2
6	Level 5 * 2 (rnd 5,000)[13]	Level 5 * 2 (rnd 5,000)	Level 5 * 2 (rnd 5,000)
7	Level 6 * 2	Level 6 * 2	Level 6 * 2
8	Level 7 * 2	Level 7 * 2	Level 7 * 2
9	Level 8 * 2	Level 8 * 2	Level 8 * 2
10	Level 9 + 100,000	Level 9 + 120,000	Level 9 + 150,000
11	Level 10 + 100,000	Level 10 + 120,000	Level 10 + 150,000
12	Level 11 + 100,000	Level 11 + 120,000	Level 11 + 150,000
13	Level 12 + 100,000	Level 12 + 120,000	Level 12 + 150,000
14	Level 13 + 100,000	Level 13 + 120,000	Level 13 + 150,000
15	Level 14 + 100,000	Level 14 + 120,000	Level 14 + 150,000
16	Level 15 + 100,000	Level 15 + 120,000	Level 15 + 150,000
17	Level 16 + 100,000	Level 16 + 120,000	Level 16 + 150,000
18	Level 17 + 100,000	Level 17 + 120,000	Level 17 + 150,000
19	Level 18 + 100,000	Level 18 + 120,000	Level 18 + 150,000
20	Level 19 + 100,000	Level 19 + 120,000	Level 19 + 150,000
21	Level 20 + 100,000	Level 20 + 120,000	Level 20 + 150,000
22	Level 21 + 100,000	Level 21 + 120,000	Level 21 + 150,000
23	Level 22 + 100,000	Level 22 + 120,000	Level 22 + 150,000
24	Level 23 + 100,000	Level 23 + 120,000	Level 23 + 150,000
25	Level 24 + 100,000	Level 24 + 120,000	Level 24 + 150,000
26	Level 25 + 100,000	Level 25 + 120,000	Level 25 + 150,000
27	Level 26 + 100,000	Level 26 + 120,000	Level 26 + 150,000
28	Level 27 + 100,000	Level 27 + 120,000	Level 27 + 150,000
29	Level 28 + 100,000	Level 28 + 120,000	Level 28 + 150,000
30	Level 29 + 100,000	Level 29 + 120,000	Level 29 + 150,000
31	Level 30 + 100,000	Level 30 + 120,000	Level 30 + 150,000
32	Level 31 + 100,000	Level 31 + 120,000	Level 31 + 150,000
33	Level 32 + 100,000	Level 32 + 120,000	Level 32 + 150,000
34	Level 33 + 100,000	Level 33 + 120,000	Level 33 + 150,000
35	Level 34 + 100,000	Level 34 + 120,000	Level 34 + 150,000
36	Level 35 + 100,000	Level 35 + 120,000	Level 35 + 150,000

For the mathematically weak-at-heart, a software tool exists to compute these values for you. This tool also automates the XP cost calculation for new classes. It is located at: http://dnd.welshpiper.com/download/class_xp.zip.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this article adequately addresses the need for developing new and consistent classes within the OD&D game. Now DMs and players alike may develop specialised classes to suit their imaginations, the particulars of the campaign setting itself, and the playing styles of the players as a whole. So, let your class-generation mind fly and take your hand at building the perfect class for your setting. Good gaming!

[13] Round up to nearest 5,000 XP.

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