

THE THREE-CLASS HACK

Edition 2.0

A Conversion of Whitehack's Character
Classes to The Black Hack

Norbert G. Matausch



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To Kerstin, Luna, Stella and
Charlotte.

I have the highest respect for Christian Mehrstam's Whitehack. It's definitely the most elegantly presented roleplaying game I have ever seen. This is an homage to a game that has changed my opinion about OSR gaming.

The reason I wrote this conversion is that Whitehack keeps some of the complexity (if that's even the right word to use in the context of OD&D) of the original game -- including quite a handful of modifiers. While I'm a fan of elegant rule systems, I ideally don't want any arithmetic operations in my games. That's where David Black's The Black Hack swoops in to save the day: it all but eliminates any pluses and minuses.

Ever since I backed the TBH kickstarter a while ago, I played with the idea to somehow blackhackify Whitehack. The sheer scope of the project stopped me dead in my tracks. Till yesterday. Wouldn't it be a lot simpler and easier to convert only the classes and their surrounding rules? And this is exactly what I did.



CHAPTER I

CHARACTER CREATION

With a few simple add-ons, we cover all the rules we need to make this hack work.

- 1) Roll stats
- 2) Choose a class: Deft, Strong or Wise.
- 3) Your character has both Slots and Groups. Slots are containers for special features. Groups are descriptors that specify species, vocations/professions and affiliations of the

character. For any attribute of 5 or less, your character gains one additional affiliation (and loses it again if it's raised above 5). Write each Group next to an attribute that you think is important or somehow characteristic for it.

Groups have a distinct mechanical benefit: When you test an attribute that has a Group written next to it, and if that Group has any relevance to the roll, you roll with Advantage.

Species: The first type of group, must be chosen at character creation. Species groups are written next to two attributes. If your game world has one race as the predominant race, don't write anything down.

Vocation: The second type of group, this word describes the character's profession or calling. This can be as fancy or profane as you want; „fortuneteller“, „assassin“, „circus wrestler“, „swineherder“ or „milkmaid“ are perfectly okay.

Affiliation: The last type of group. Affiliations can be guilds, schools, orders, tribes, companies, secret cabals or any other social structure your character belongs to. Affiliations may provide help, friends, equipment or even special skills. They co-create the world the characters live in – and they provide the GM with an opportunity to come up with enemies.

Deft characters don't write their vocation next to any attributes because they get Advantage to any roll if it's in line with their vocation, regardless of what attribute is used.

- 4) Buy equipment.

CHARACTER CLASSES

There are three character classes available in The Three-Class Hack. They're not as rigid as traditional classes. It's best to consider them guidelines to create your very own, personal class in a few simple steps.

THE DEFT

Starting HP: 1d6 + 4

HP Per Level/Resting: 1d6

Weapons & Armor: all weapons; armor leather or lighter (if you wear heavier armor, lose all special features except Skillhound, for as long as you wear that armor)

Attack Damage: 1d6 / 1d4 Unarmed or Improvising

Deft characters rely on superior technique and skills honed to perfection. They might for instance be thieves, wandering monks, spies, marksmen, assassins or rangers.

Deft characters fill their slots with objects or beings (persons, animals, etc) they have attuned to. For each feature slot, create an active and an inactive attunement. Switching inactives into slots takes a full day.

You have to choose a vocation (see page 1 of this document) at level 1 (before you start playing). DO NOT write this vocation next to any attribute.

Special Features

Skillhound: All tasks and attacks in line with the Deft character's vocation are rolled with Advantage.

Deft Blow: When in an advantageous position in combat, a Deft character can choose to do double damage instead of attacking with Advantage.

Automatic Success: Once per day, a hard task succeeds automatically if the Deft character is using something he is attuned to.

Easy Success: Once per day, a Deft character can succeed in a task that is normally considered Impossible, if he is using something he is attuned to and if he passes a standard attribute test.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for STR or DEX.

DEFT LEVEL	SLOTS	GROUPS
1-2	1	2
3	1	3
4	2	3
5-6	2	4
7-8	3	5
9	3	6
10	4	6

THE STRONG

Starting HP: 1d10 + 4

HP Per Level/Resting: 1d10

Weapons & Armor: any and all

Attack Damage: 1d8 / 1d6 Unarmed or Improvising

Strong characters rely on their combat skills combined with bodily strength. They can for example be warriors, guards, brigands, knights, bounty hunters or barbarians. Strong characters fill their slots with special combat features.

Special Features

Plow through the enemy: Every Strong character starts with this feature. If a Strong character reduces an opponent's hit points to zero, he is allowed to use that momentum to make an attack against another, adjacent enemy.

Monster Power: Every Strong character starts with this feature. If a Strong character kills a monster, its special power is transferred onto him. He can keep it as long as he wants, but it disappears once the character uses it. It can also be replaced by the power of another monster that the character has slain.

To fill the Strong character's slots, choose from the following combat feature list:

Protect: A Strong character may forsake all actions in a round of combat and protect an adjacent character by drawing all attacks that were originally aimed at him on the Strong character instead. This works for 1 round.

Push: After a successful attack, the Strong character can push an opponent 10 feet.

Against Giants: When fighting huge opponents like dragons or giants, the Strong character can cling to them. He has to pass a STR test every round to cling to the opponent. He gains Advantage on all attack and damage rolls as long as he clings to the opponent.

Battle Frenzy: The Strong character works up a frenzy that gives him Advantage on all attack rolls, but reduces their armor type by two classes (i.e., Plate&Mail counts as Leather, Chain Mail counts

as Gambeson, Leather and Gambeson count as regular clothing). The character has to pass a INT test or makes one more attack – against anyone near him.

Tactician: The Strong character bestows an Advantage on an ally; for two attack rolls, once per battle. He has to give short verbal instructions.

Encourage/Frighten: The Strong character encourages allies and gives them Advantage on one roll, once per battle. He can also invert this to frighten enemies and force a Disadvantage on one roll.

Battle Prowess: If the Strong character does not move in a round and stays right where he is, he can make one melee attack first, and a ranged attack immediately after, in the same round.

Wait for an opportunity: If a Strong character forsakes his attack and parries an attack instead (DEX test), he gains Advantage on his next attack and damage roll. If he parries for two consecutive rounds, he gains two attacks in his next round, both of which are rolled with Advantage on attack and damage.

Sunder Shield: the Strong character can choose to negate all damage from one attack by blocking it with his shield, destroying it in the process.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for STR or DEX.

STRONG LEVEL	SLOTS	GROUPS
1-3	1	2
4-6	2	3
7-9	3	4
10	4	5

THE WISE

Starting HP: 1d4 + 4

HP Per Level/Resting: 1d4/2d4 (can only heal naturally, can't be healed by magic, medicine or skilled treatment)

Weapons & Armor: one-handed weapons, quarterstaff, crossbow, musket; armor: leather

Attack Damage: 1d4 / 1 Unarmed or Improvising

Wise characters have an exceptional aptitude for tasks that require a strong or agile mind. They may be wizards, priests, alchemists, exorcists, demonologists, druids, runecarvers, bards or mad scientists. Wise characters can do things that are magic – or appear to be. This is done through miracles – spells, prayers, songs, spirits, etc – as per the vocation of the Wise character.

Miracles (Magic)

Wise characters fill each of their slots with two miracles – an active one, and an inactive one. If the character's WIS is 14 or 15, he gains one additional inactive miracle. If his WIS is 16+, he gains two additional inactive miracles.

Each miracle is written as a few descriptive, but not too specific words, like „Power Ball“ or „Fist of the Almighty God“. When a Wise character wants to use a miracle, the player describes what he wants it to do. The GM decides if the wording of the miracle and the character's vocation fit the description and assigns a Hit Point cost to it. This is the amount of HP the Wise character loses when he casts the spell. Magic is powerful, but dangerously costly.

Switching inactive miracles to active status takes a full day (study, meditation and preparation).

Most miracles succeed without a roll of the die; some might require a WIS or INT test. Some miracles allow the target a saving throw: the Wise

character must test their INT or WIS to overcome their defenses.

Special Features

Miracles: The Wise character can perform/cast miracles. What he calls them is up to the player. A cleric might call them prayers, while a sorcerer might prefer the term „spells“.

Only heal naturally: Wise characters can't be healed by magic, medicine or skilled treatment. They have to heal naturally.

Determining HP costs for miracles:

Effect	Cost	in-game effect
minor	1 hp	+1 modifier to attribute or armor, 1d8 damage
moderate	2 hp	+2 modifier to attribute or armor, 2d8 damage
major	3 hp	+3 modifier to attribute or armor, 3d8 damage
spectacular	4 hp	+4 modifier to attribute or armor, 4d8 damage
historic	7 hp	+5 modifier to attribute or armor, 5d8 damage
Duration		Cost
instantaneous		0 hp
1 minute		1 hp
1 hour		2 hp
1 day		3 hp
permanent		7 hp

Range	Cost
touch	0 hp
close	1 hp
near	2 hp
far	5 hp

Area of Effect	Cost
self	0 hp
single target	1 hp
small area	2 hp
large area	6 hp

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for INT or WIS.

WISE LEVEL	SLOTS	GROUPS
1-2	1	2
3	2	2
4	2	3
5-6	3	3
7-8	4	4
9	5	4
10	5	5



CHAPTER II

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Where I roll up three characters and explain how they work in the game.

Lori Bloodbeard, level 1 Deft Dwarf Assassin

Str 16, Dex 12 (Dwarf), Con 7 (Dwarf), Int 12, Wis 7, Cha 14, HD: 1d6, HP: 7, damage 1d6/1d4; Skillhound, Deft Blow, Autosuccess, Easy Success; Attunements: Dagger (active), Rope (inactive); 110 coins

Lori is attuned to two items: a dagger and a rope. If he is using one of them, he'll automatically succeed in a hard task once per day (for instance, throwing the dagger to cut through the rope of a gallows), and if he tries an impossible maneuver with them, he'll only have to pass a standard attribute check. So, Lori could try to ricochet his dagger around two corners, directly into the eye of a hapless orc. This would normally be impossibly difficult, but Lori is a Deft Assassin, so the GM rules that he only has to pass one successful DEX test.

Also, Lori's player has written one of Lori's groups, Dwarf (species) next to DEX and CON. That means that whenever Lori does something that Dwarves do involving DEX or CON, he rolls with Advantage.

Lori, being a Deft character, also rolls with Advantage whenever he does something that assassins do. Deft characters get this Advantage across the board, it is not limited to one single attribute.

Eisenbart Breitenstein, level 1 Strong Circus Wrestler

Str 15 (Circus Wrestler), Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 7 (The Breitenstein Serious Catch-as-catch-can Association), Cha 10, HD: 1d10, HP: 9, damage

1d8/1d6; Plow thru the enemy, Monster Power, Against Giants; 90 coins

Eisenbart is a Strong character and gets two groups at the start of his adventurous life. His first group is his vocation, Circus Wrestler. Eisenbart's player writes it next to STR, which means he will test STR with Advantage whenever being a wrestler is relevant to the roll. As wrestling is very much a strength-based activity, Eisenbart will often test his STR with advantage.

His second group is an affiliation, The Breitenstein Serious Catch-as-catch-can Association. So, whenever Eisenbart needs answers or tests his WIS otherwise and can somehow establish a link between the question and his affiliation, he'll roll with Advantage.

Fizzbolt Grumphwackle, level 1 Wise Kobold Alchemist
Str 10, Dex 10 (kobold), Con 7 (kobold), Int 12 (alchemist), Wis 7, Cha 13, HD: 1d4, HP: 6, damage 1d4/1; Heal Only Naturally; Potions (Miracles): Powder of Awesome (active), Glossolalia Tar (inactive); 130 coins

Fizzbolt is a Wise character, able to use magic or magic-like technology. In this case, Fizzbolt's player decided to make him an alchemist. This means that Fizzbolt starts with two „miracles“ -- potions. What each potion does exactly will be determined on a case-to-case basis. After the player has described what he wants a potion to do, the GM determines how many hp this miracle costs, using the tables presented in the description of the Wise class.

For instance, the Powder of Awesome could be used in one case to give an ally a +2 modifier to his CHA. This effect lasts one hour. The cost of this miracle is 5 hit points. In another situation, the Powder may be used as a potion that enables the user to fly for a minute or so, also with a 5 hit point price tag.

Fizzbolt starts with two groups, one species (kobold) and one vocation (alchemist). So, whenever he tries something where his koboldness or his alchemy would help him, he tests the attributes that have the groups written next to them with Advantage.



CHAPTER III

TWO NEW CLASSES

Where I present two additional classes that are considered to be „rare“. It is advisable to not offer them at the start of your campaign. Keep these classes special.

THE BRAVE

Starting HP: 1d8 + 4

HP Per Level/Resting: 1d8

Weapons & Armor: any weapon, armor: gambeson

Attack Damage: 1d6 / 1d4 Unarmed or Improvising

Courage trumps both lack of skills and prowess. Brave characters are underdogs and unlikely heroes.

Special Features

Losing is winning: Every Brave character starts with this special feature. Every time a Brave character fails at a roll (attack rolls excluded), he gains a Comeback die (1d6). Add a Comeback Die to any attribute, armor or to use it as damage die when rolling for something else. You can use more than one Comeback Die, but only the highest die counts. If a roll fails despite a Comeback Die, all those dice are lost and the roll does not generate a new Comeback Die.

Quick Gainer: Every Brave character starts with this special feature. On levels 1 to 3, roll with Advantage for new hp.

No!: Every Brave character starts with this special feature. Once per session, the Brave can deny an enemy a successful attack, miracle or fear effect directed at him.

Pack Mule: The Brave character disregards disadvantage on encumbrance tests.

Cheating Death: Once per session, the character may roll with Advantage on the Out of Action table.

Helping a friend: The Brave character chooses a party member at the beginning of the session. When he rolls to protect them, he gains one free Comeback Die to one of his attributes.

Resistance to curses: The character rolls with advantage against cursed objects.

All but invisible: At the start of a battle, enemies always choose to attack someone else first -- if there is someone else to attack. This feature can be inverted if the player wishes.

Hero: Once per session, the Brave can disregard any class/vocation/species/affiliation requirement for using an object, place or passage.

Divine Grace: Once per session, the character's god will hear his prayer. GM decides in what way this prayer is heard.

Good enough: Any improvised weapon does 1d6 damage.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase.

BRAVE LEVEL	SLOTS	GROUPS
1-3	1	2
4-6	2	3
7-8	3	3
9	3	4
10	4	4

THE FORTUNATE

Starting HP: 1d4 + 4

HP Per Level/Resting: 1d4

Weapons & Armor: any

Attack Damage: 1d6 / 1d4 Unarmed or Improvising

Born with the advantages of nobility, fame, destiny and immense wealth, Fortunate characters are a very special class.

Fortunate characters start their game with one retainer and get slots for additional ones.

Special Features

I'll have that: Every Fortunate character starts with this special feature. Once per session, he can use his fortune in a major way, like hiring a large ship, performing the will of a god, getting a personal audience with the queen, etc.

Standing: Every Fortunate character starts with this special feature. The character has a defining standing that works like an occasional group booster (e.g., „Reincarnated Master“, „Pope of the Northern Hemisphere“). This standing is clearly visible (clothing, props, tattoos, etc). If the GM thinks a character's standing is relevant to a situation, affiliated factions are more helpful, vocations are beneficial regardless of what attribute is used, and the character's species gives benefits or drawbacks regardless of attribute.

Signature Object: Every Fortunate character starts with this special feature. The signature object is a symbol of your standing. It gives no bonuses or special features, but it can't be lost, destroyed or lost forever -- unless the player wants this to happen.

Retainers: The character starts with one retainer that is allowed to improve their stats just like a

character. Retainers level up with the Fortunate character.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase.

FORTUNATE LEVEL	SLOTS	GROUPS
1-2	1	2
3	1	3
4	2	3
5-6	2	4
7-8	3	5
9	3	6
10	4	6

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