

# Jack

File: Character Classes

by Frank Mentzer  
2016 December

## Preface

All the character classes represented in BECM (compiled in the R.C.) are based on a 36-level system. Overall their character and usage parallel the Original, Holmes, and Moldvay/Cook editions. The Thief, however, suffers badly from the spread.

Early depictions of thieves, from 1975 Greyhawk onward, are harsh. Their craft is theft, innately evil, and they are famed for lack of trust and camaraderie. But over the years, the variant 'locksmith' approach has thrived, along with various rationales for non-evil thieves contributing their talents to an adventuring party.

The Jack (short for Jack-of-all-Trades, *fem.* Jill) is an additional class representing this multi-talented individual who cooperates with the group. It is rooted in the original Thief class, but somewhat changed – omitting thievery *per se*, including Pickpocketing – and expanded for campaign use.

As with the entire BECM series, all of these details are Guidelines. Apply piecemeal or in toto, adjusting for your own game and campaign.

## Jack

An evolved variation of the OD&D Thief class, this multi-specialist for the BECM edition provides unique services for an adventuring group, and also includes campaign-based skills and knowledge.

All rolls are made with 1d20. A result that exceeds the target is a failure. A roll equal to or below the target succeeds.

Many normal people have these skills to a very limited extent. A range for 'amateurs' is given below, along with the starting score for a Level 1 Jack.

### Experience and general abilities

Use most standard parameters given for Thieves, including Prime Requisite, XP chart and bonuses, Hit Dice, Armor & Weapons, and ability to Read Languages (L4+) and use Scrolls (L10+).

Replace "Special Abilities" (Skills) with the following.

## Skills

Standard Skills +1 (each) per level gained

	Amateur	1st level T.
Listen	1-4	5
Climb	3-8	15
Tradecraft	1-4	8

Advanced Skills +2 points per level gained, apply as desired

	Amateur	1st level T.
Appraisal	1-2	4
Guild	0-1	3
Network	2-7	2

VERSION 2: STILL FOR PUBLIC INPUT

In all cases, the relevant skill knowledge is provincial, specific to one culture or civilization. Items (especially locks and traps) created by unfamiliar beings, or used in unfamiliar environments or situations (including other-planar), may be subject to large penalty modifiers, such as half- or quarter-normal. Similar modifiers may be required for extreme cultural differences (such as medieval and space-age).

The most common modifier to Guild and Networking scores (only) is cash. All such details must be left to the DM, dependent on both economics and story. The chance of acquiring needed information or services is almost always subject to tips and bribes, on a scale that befits the objective.

### Skill Check

Roll 1d20, and modify for bonus or penalty. If the result is above the target score, the attempt fails; otherwise it succeeds. In non-trivial circumstances, a natural roll of 20 always fails.

### Modifiers

Two distinctly different methods are used, and are specified in each skill.

**Penalty:** Deduct a specified number from the skill score. Example: "The special lock was made overseas, so apply a -5 penalty to Open Lock attempts."

**Partial:** Calculate a portion of the skill score. Example: "In the cluttered smithy, check any attempt to Move Quietly at 1/3 normal."

**Time:** For most skills, the given chances apply when a typical or 'normal' amount of time is spent in pursuit thereof. That time factor obviously varies by the situation, but the figure should be known by all, not just the DM. If the players choose to spend more or less time, adjust the chance proportionately; for example, half normal time spent = half normal chance, double normal time = double chance. (Despite this, the DM may rule that a natural roll of 20 always fails.)

**Multiple actors:** If a skill or action can be improved by adding more personnel (notably Searching and Listening), consider their scores cumulative, and make one d20 roll for the group effort.

## Skill Details

**Standard Skills** each gains +1 per level

**Listen** (start: 5)  
This is a refined and trained ability to hear close but faint sounds, or very distant sounds. The Jack's comrades must be very quiet while this skill is used.

**Climb** (start: 15)  
Climbing is a unique and well-trained skill, hence its high chance of success. Formerly "Climb Walls", this applies to any surface at an angle of roughly 70 degrees (20° from vertical) or greater. Success indicates a complete climb. Failure indicates a fall from the intended climb's midpoint.

**Modifiers:** Penalties may apply in any case. Shoddy or aged construction may produce loose rocks/bricks, for example. A slippery 90° surface should have the maximum penalty, as much as -100%. (Note that a 6th level has base 100% chance, 26th level 200%.)

If the climb is worse than vertical (or V+, the climber's legs thrust out further than the arms), apply Partial ability instead of penalties. A worst-case may involve 50% Partial for slipperiness and lack of toe-holds, plus 50% Partial for being V+, for a net 25% of normal chances.

**Tradecraft** (start: 8)  
Stealth, Searching, and Fingerwork

This general category includes most 'thief' activity, except those skills specifically related to theft (being the purview of the Thieves' Guild).

**Search:** This skill is used for any general search of a small area, a being, or an object.

**Trap Search (special case):** Success indicates that the mechanism is detected but not triggered. Failure indicates no result or warning. **Modifiers:** Subtract from the roll 1 per level or Hit Die of the individual who designed the trap. (Relevant abilities producing asterisk bonuses may be added to HD.)

Combined: When multiple individuals search the same area at the same time, add all scores and check once for the whole group. A clerical *Bless* spell adds +1 bonus to the total.

Example: A group of four 3rd level characters, including a Jack and a thief, search a room together. The Jack's base score is 10, the Thief adds +4 (20% converted to d20), and +2 (minimum) for the others. Thus, a roll of 16 or less (on d20) indicates that a trap (if any) is found.

### Stealth

This category includes the former skills of Hide (in Shadows) and Move Silently. It includes these and other similar stealthy activities.

This skill should rarely be modified, but special situations may exist. Opponents with exceptional senses may mandate a Partial chance, but modifiers are otherwise typically a Penalty.

### Advanced Skills (progress by player choice)

The following new skill categories are based on an ongoing game campaign, a social context within which the character operates.

Category:	Starting Score (d20)
Appraisal	4
Networking	3
Status	2

Progress: The character gains 2 points per level, which may be added singly or jointly to any of these three ratings. The DM may also reward character activities designed to advance in a specific category.

No awards can be applied to Standard skills by either the player or DM; they apply to Advanced skills only.

### Appraisal (start: 4)

This category addresses the actual physical valuables commonly retrieved by adventurers. It covers six general categories of items: Coins, Gems, Jewelry, Bulk, Art, and Furnishings.

### Fingerwork

This category includes the former skills of Open Locks and Remove Traps. It includes these and all other actions using fingers. On a small scale this can include all sleight-of-hand and misdirection functions. Large-scale applications may include makeshift field devices and general construction.

Open Lock: Success produces a 'click' sound, but the lock might not open itself thereafter, requiring some added pressure. Failure produces no result. Most knowledge of locks is provincial and culturally specific. Recommended modifiers for a lock from...

a nearby land	-10% penalty
far overland	-20 to -50% penalty
overseas	Half normal
off-planet	One-quarter normal
off-plane	anything (DM's discretion)

*Bulk* applies to any object representing valuable metal in quantity, such as a golden bust or silver throne. Success means that the character identifies its approximate composition (whether 100% or 10% gold, for example) and overall value. This check also applies to huge semi-precious stones, such as a 10 kg garnet.

Success at an Appraisal check indicates that the character knows the relative value of the treasure. The attempt takes 1 round (6 seconds). The result is inaccurate. The variance is generally:

Coin	± 2	Bulk	± 6
Gem	± 4	Art	± 8
Jewelry	± 5	Furnishings	± 10

Quantity: Given a successful Appraisal check, up to 1,000 coins per character level may be accurately appraised/estimated within a given treasure hoard. Up to 3 gems and 1 piece of Jewelry, Art, or a Furnishing can be similarly appraised. Quantity increases proportionally if additional time is allotted.

### Networking (start: 3)

This category includes three interactive functions: Buy, Sell, and Finance. Use the base score for Buy attempts, but apply a Penalty to Sell and double penalty to Finance.

The base Network score can be Penalized in unfamiliar areas, or given a Bonus when used repeatedly in a local area. Only apply Partial ability in an utterly alien situation (strange culture, unfamiliar customs, unknown merchandise).

**Buy:** The chance that the character knows where to acquire a desired resource. The type can be anything -- pottery, glassware, ironworks, wooden objects, foodstuffs and related, livestock, and more.

In a large city, such sources are often plentiful and easily found, but the character's knowledge may add speed and/or decrease cost. Generally, the smaller the residential area, the fewer sources exist; success at a Buying check may indicate a journey prior to the acquisition ("yeah, I know a guy in Johnstown who makes those").

Barter and theft are certainly possible once a source is known. The DM may apply social controls as appropriate, from a Constabulary to a standing Army.

**Sell:** This represents knowledge of who buys what. This commonly applies to the covert sale of treasures acquired ('fencing' stolen goods), but also applies to common business transactions occurring in a given area with which the character is reasonably familiar.

Buyers have overhead (rent, food, and other costs of life), and never offer more than half an item's theoretical sale value (often 20% or less). Offers may also vary by rarity or availability of the goods sold.

The Sell score may also be used to check for knowledge of commodity variations, such as a glut or scarcity of a given substance (e.g. silver, dragon scales, etc.).

**Finance:** Sometimes characters need to borrow funds. This is the chance that the character knows someone who might loan them cash (coinage). It also applies for investment opportunities, i.e. if the characters wish to invest large amounts of funds in a reasonably safe way.

This topic may become complex, varying by the size of the loan, security offered (magic items etc.), cost/interest, and other factors. The individual or organization making the loan often requires a method for finding the recipient afterwards (typically by magical means), which may involve a tattoo or other permanent mark.

### Status (start: 2)

This figure indicates the character's status within the Guild of Jacks (whatever its campaign name). The guild typically has connections to most other Guilds, especially including that of Thieves.

Use this figure to check various guild-related details, such as the chance of...

**Notoriety:** Any given guild member knows of the character

**Stash:** Guild may agree to keep an item in complete secrecy and under the highest security

**Safe House:** Stashing a person or people

**Information:** Guild may know of a given special item or bit of uncommon or rare knowledge

**Services:** Guild may agree to supply personnel (for a fee) for a special or covert operation. The more illegal the service, the higher the cost and risk.



Jack-type skills for normal people						
	Listen	Climb	Tradecraft	Appraise	Network	Status
Amateur	1-4	3-8	1-4	1-2	2-7	0-1

### Jack Class Skills

Level	<i>+1 per skill per level</i>			<i>distribute 2 points per level</i>		
	Listen	Climb	Tradecraft	Appraisal	Networking	Status
1	5	15	8	4	2	3
2	6	16	9			
3	7	17	10			
4	8	18	11			
5	9	19	12			
6	10	20	13			
7	11	21	14			
8	12	22	15			
9	13	23	16			
10	14	24	17			
11	15	25	18			
12	16	26	19			
13	17	27	20			
14	18	28	21			
15	19	29	22			
16	20	30	23			

(etc.)

To Check: Roll d20, apply modifiers. Aim for Target number or less.  
 Target numbers may be reduced by Penalties (number deducted)  
 or Partial ability use (a given fraction of normal chances).

Skill ratings of 20 or higher are automatically successful  
 in many circumstances (DM's discretion).

A roll of 20 on any Skill Check indicates failure, regardless of the target number.

**VERSION 2: STILL FOR PUBLIC INPUT**