

# Changing Departments

By Chris Freeman

The following optional rules were incorporated to allow characters change departments over time, so that players were less inclined to drop old characters and create new ones of use the new departments presented in the sourcebooks. It should be noted, that these rules provide a significant boost to the power-level of the characters, and should definitely be checked over with the GC first. However, in addition to the power-boost, it can also realistically represent agents who are taken from outside agencies, before receiving additional training from the Agency. Now the players can take the Peace Officer who gets assigned to “The Basement”, or the Racer that joins the Home Office. You can even play a rehabilitated Indoctrinated Hand of Glory operative, who goes on to become one of the Agency’s greatest agents.

## Character Generation

Character generation remains unchanged, and 1<sup>st</sup> level characters get to choose their starting department as normal, gaining all the benefits of that department, including the ability score adjustments and bonus feat.

## Changing Department

When a character gains a level of experience, their departmental talents automatically improve, relative to their new level. The usual break point for improvements are at level 4, and every 4<sup>th</sup> level thereafter, though some abilities increase faster or slower than this.

When a character gains a level, they may opt to change their department. When they opt to change their department, the character gains any improvements he would have had from his previous department, if any. The character counts as a 0-level character in their new department. When they next gain a level, the character no longer increases their original department, but instead gains all the first level benefits of their new department, including ability score adjustments and bonus feat.

As the character advances, he improves the talents of his current department, working the bonuses out as if he was a Level 0 character when he opted to change departments. The character’s previous department never advances.

*Example:* Snoops starts out as a 1<sup>st</sup> level agent from Department 3: Computer Espionage. She gets the first level abilities of the department, including the ability score adjustments (Int +2, Wis -2), a free laptop computer with a +1 power rating, a +1 departmental bonus to Computers and Electronics checks, and a bonus gear feat.

At 4<sup>th</sup> level, Snoops opts to change her department to “The Basement”. She gains all the improvements of her original department, which includes receiving a free laptop computer upgraded to a +2 power rating, increasing her departmental bonus to Computers and Electronics checks to +2, and another bonus gear feat (see below). She does not gain any of the benefits of her new department (since she counts as level 0 for this department)

At 5<sup>th</sup> level, Snoops gains all the 1<sup>st</sup> level benefits of “The Basement”, including new ability score adjustments (+2 Wis, -2 Cha), +1 bonus skill point, a +1 departmental bonus to Will saves, and a bonus basic skill feat. As Snoops gains more levels, the talents from “The Basement” Department increase, but her Computer Espionage Departmental Talents never advance.

## Changing Restrictions

There are two restrictions for changing departments. Firstly, a character cannot change back to a department they have previously left. Secondly, a character cannot opt to change departments when they have gained the 1<sup>st</sup>-level benefits of any department. Using the example above, Snoops could not have opted to change department again at 5<sup>th</sup> level, but may decide to do so at 6<sup>th</sup> level or later.

## Macro Departments

Macro departments are broad departments with a selection of specialities – one of which must be chosen when the macro department is chosen. The rules for Changing Departments can be used to allow character to change their speciality within a macro department.

When a character opts to change their speciality in a macro department, they gain any departmental improvements they would have received from their department and macro speciality, if any. The character counts as a 0-level character for their new macro speciality. Upon gaining their next level, the agent gains all the 1<sup>st</sup> level bonuses of their new macro speciality, but the broad benefits of the macro department are increased as if the character hadn't changed department.

Characters cannot change back to a macro specialty they have previously left. Once a character has completely left the macro department, the character cannot change back to that macro department, even if they choose a different speciality.

*Example:* Sarge starts out as a 1<sup>st</sup> level agent with the Officer Training macro department. He gains all the 1<sup>st</sup> level benefits of the macro department, including the ability score adjustments (+2 Cha, -2 to any other ability score), a +1 departmental bonus to Initiative checks, and the fact that the Profession (Military) skill is always a class skill for him. Sarge takes the Sandhurst Military Academy as his speciality for the macro department, and gains all the 1<sup>st</sup> level benefits of that speciality, including the +1 departmental bonus to Inspiration checks, and Fortunate as a bonus feat.

At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, Sarge opts to change his departmental speciality to the United States Military Academy at West Point. None of his departmental benefits improve at this time, and he doesn't gain any of the benefits of his new speciality at this time.

At 4<sup>th</sup> level, Sarge gains all the 1<sup>st</sup> level benefits of his new speciality, including a +1 departmental bonus to all favour checks, and Political Favours as a bonus feat. The broad benefits of his macro department improve as if Sarge hadn't changed department – so his departmental bonus to Initiative checks improves to +2.

As Sarge continues to gain experience, the talents from his new speciality continue to advance, while those of his previous speciality remain unchanged. The broad benefits of the macro department continue to improve as well, as if he hadn't changed department. So at 8<sup>th</sup> level, Sarge would gain a bonus Style feat (see below) and his departmental bonus to Favour checks would improve to +2, thanks to his new speciality. In addition, his departmental bonus to Initiative checks would be improved to +3, the same value it would have been if Sarge had kept his previous speciality.

## Notes and Revisions

Because of the change these rules have on the game, several of the Departments need revising, to avoid unintentional rules abuse.

## Ability Score Adjustments

Consider all ability score adjustments to be departmental modifiers. Departmental modifiers do not stack, but with the case of ability score adjustments, a departmental penalty will cancel out a departmental bonus, and vice versa. If the character has more than two departmental modifiers to a single ability score, then cancel out pairs of bonuses and penalties and use the remaining modifiers to determine the departmental ability score adjustment.

*Example:* Continuing the Example with Snoops above, the Wisdom penalty granted by Department 3: Computer Espionage is cancelled out by the Wisdom bonus granted by "The Basement". If Snoops later opted to join Department 2: Military Operations, and placed her +2 ability score bonus in Wisdom, Snoops would end up with a +2 departmental bonus to Wisdom. However, if she opted to place the bonus in Intelligence, Snoops would still only have a +2 departmental bonus to Intelligence. Likewise, if Snoops placed her -2 ability score adjustment in Charisma, she would still only have a -2 departmental penalty to Charisma.

## Other Bonuses

All other bonuses should be considered departmental bonuses unless specifically named otherwise. Departmental bonuses do not stack – instead, the character should use the higher of the two bonuses.

## Bonus Feats

All departments grant additional bonus feats at 4<sup>th</sup> level, and every four levels thereafter, from the same trees as those granted at 1<sup>st</sup> level. If the department or speciality grants a specific named feat, than that department grants a generic bonus feat at later levels, though the GC may opt to restrict these bonus feats to those from the same feat tree, or those with the original 1<sup>st</sup>-level feats as a prerequisite. Unlike the named first level bonus feat, prerequisites are not waived for these additional bonus feats.

## **The Lord Prestige Class (The Archer Foundation)**

The core ability of the Lord prestige class is to allow the character to have a second department that advances as the character gains levels in that class. This department can be a previous department or new department as the player wishes. If it is a previous department, the character's levels in the Lord prestige class stack with those in the previous department to determine any improvements to the departmental talents of the class.

The Lord prestige class does not grant ability score modifiers or bonus feats from new or previous departments. Also, the secondary department granted by the Lord prestige class cannot be changed under any circumstances.

*Example:* Continuing the Example with Snoops above, if she entered the Lord prestige class later on, she could opt to take Department 3: Computer Espionage as her secondary department, to allow her to advance that department some more. Since she is considered level 4 for determining the benefits of Department 3: Computer Espionage, she would not gain any additional benefits from her secondary department until she is a Level 4 Lord – at which time she gains a free laptop computer upgraded to +3 Power as part of her personal gear, and her departmental bonus to Computers and Electronics checks is improved to +3. Snoops does not gain another bonus gear feat however.

## **Impact of the Changing Department Rules**

These rules have a significant impact upon the Spycraft system when used. They significantly increase the power level of the characters, by increasing the number of feats each character can have. These rules also increase the potential for min-maxing and may cause a power gulf between agents in the group.

Characters that change departments (every two levels – for a total of 10 departments at level 20) will have a wider variety of low level bonuses and abilities, as well as a range of ability score adjustments and more bonus feats. Those that stick with a single department will have higher bonuses in a few key areas and/or a few higher powered abilities. They will have fewer feats, but these feats tend to be of a higher level, since the character will already have the prerequisites for these later feats. Ultimately, characters with multiple departments will be more versatile than those who specialise in one.