

Easiest and Hardest Classes to Level in World of Warcraft

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## Introduction

The MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game), World of Warcraft, has swept the world by storm. World of Warcraft, WoW, is about nine and a half years old and players choose which class they want their character to be. Originally, there were nine classes to choose from: Druid, Hunter, Mage, Priest, Rogue, Warlock, Warrior, Paladin (Alliance only), and Shaman (Horde only). Through later expansions, Paladins and Shamans were opened up to the other faction and Death Knights (DKs) and Monks were introduced, resulting in the current total of eleven classes to choose from. Each class has its own specializations and abilities, making every player different. Battling through dungeons, raids, battlegrounds and quests, each class has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Since the game has such a mass appeal to the gaming community, it is very likely to attract a player who is new to role-playing games. As a result, new players may not be familiar with or aware of the different skill sets and abilities of the various classes. There are a lot of variables that go into a gamer and their class and race selection for their character, as studied by Ian Mosely in his study, "Personality and Character Selection in World of Warcraft." Two hundred and five self-selected participants took a 172-item survey for Mosely. The survey consisted of 32 questions created by Mosely that were WoW specific. The remaining 140 questions were taken from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP). The 140 IPIP questions measured the Big 5 personality characteristics, as well as a subset of behavioral facets (Mosely 2010). One of Mosely discoveries is that both men and women engage in cross-gender play, however, men are four times more likely to

play female characters than women are to play male characters. Contrary to Mosely's study, our research focused on finding and ranking the easiest and hardest classes to level in WoW. We are focusing on the in-game play while Mosely studied in-game demographics and personality traits.

### Method

The purpose of our research is to help our audience and give them information that they would not have had before. In fact, to bolster our decision to choose our research question, we realized that it is one of the top searched questions regarding World of Warcraft.

In order to research our question, we decided to use two different platforms of research, in-game surveying and the content analysis of forum threads. For the in game surveying, we chose the main cities for Horde and Alliance: Orgrimmar and Stormwind, respectively. Clinton and Michael surveyed players outside the auction house in Orgrimmar on the server Tichondrius. Adam surveyed players outside the auction house in Stormwind on the server Mannoroth. We did all of our surveying during our class period, which is from 4:00pm to 6:00pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. We decided to gather our information from the experienced WoW players because they are more likely to know most, if not all of the classes in the game so they are more likely to make a more educated decision on the classes they think are easiest and hardest to level. Therefore, when performing our surveys, we only approached level 90 characters. Additionally we surveyed players of all different classes to gather a wide range of data. For the surveys, we asked two questions. The first question was "Hello, would you mind if I asked you a WoW

related question? It is research for a class.” The question is friendly and informs the interviewee that our question is for something important. If they say yes, we asked the follow up question, “In your opinion, what are the easiest and hardest classes to level? Rank the #1, #2 and #3 easiest classes to level and rank #1, #2 and #3 hardest classes to level and DKs aren't counted.” We decided DKs are not counted because they start at level 55 and a player needs to have one character level 55 or higher before they can create and play as a DK. After the players responded with the easiest and hardest classes in their own opinion, we recorded their name, class, level and the classes they said are the easiest and hardest to level. We recorded the names of the characters that we interviewed because we wanted to make sure we didn't ask the same player multiple times. To rank classes using the data gathered from the interviews (n=50), we are implementing a point system. The point system goes as such: first easiest vote equals 10 points, second easiest vote equals 7 points, the third easiest vote equals 3 points, the third hardest vote equals -3 points, the second hardest vote equals -7 points and the first hardest vote equals -10 points. After all of the points are distributed, we added them up and arrived at a total point value (TPV).

For the content analysis of the forums, we searched for threads that gave opinions on the easiest and hardest classes. The forum that we collected data from was official World of Warcraft forum on Battle.net. The key words we used for our search terms were “Easiest Class to Level” or “Hardest Class to Level”. As we went through, we recorded the character name, the class of the character, and what class they said is easiest. We then did the same for the hardest class. Through data

mining the forums, we gathered a sample of 100 pieces of data from posts pertaining to the easiest class to level and a sample of 80 pieces of data from posts pertaining to the easiest class to level.

As we gathered data from the interviews and the forums, we put them into separate excel worksheets to organize, analyze and draw conclusions.

## Results

Data was gathered from a total of 230 different people in our study. The data was separated into three different sections: Easiest Class to Level gathered from the forums, Hardest Class to Level gathered from the forums, and the in-game interviews. For the Easiest Class to Level data gathered from the forums (n=100), we tallied the amount of times each class was said to be the easiest class to level.

Easiest Classes to Level		
RANKING	CLASS	VOTES
#1	Hunter	40
#2	Paladin	11
#2	Mage	11
#4	Monk	9
#5	Druid	6
#5	Rogue	6
#7	Warlock	5
#7	Shaman	5
#9	Priest	4
#10	Warrior	3

Table 1

As seen in Table 1, Hunter was the clear victor in determining which class is perceived to be the easiest class to level. Hunters were voted easiest class to level 40% of the time, which is 29% higher than the classes in second. However, from fourth to tenth, the votes are all within six of each other.

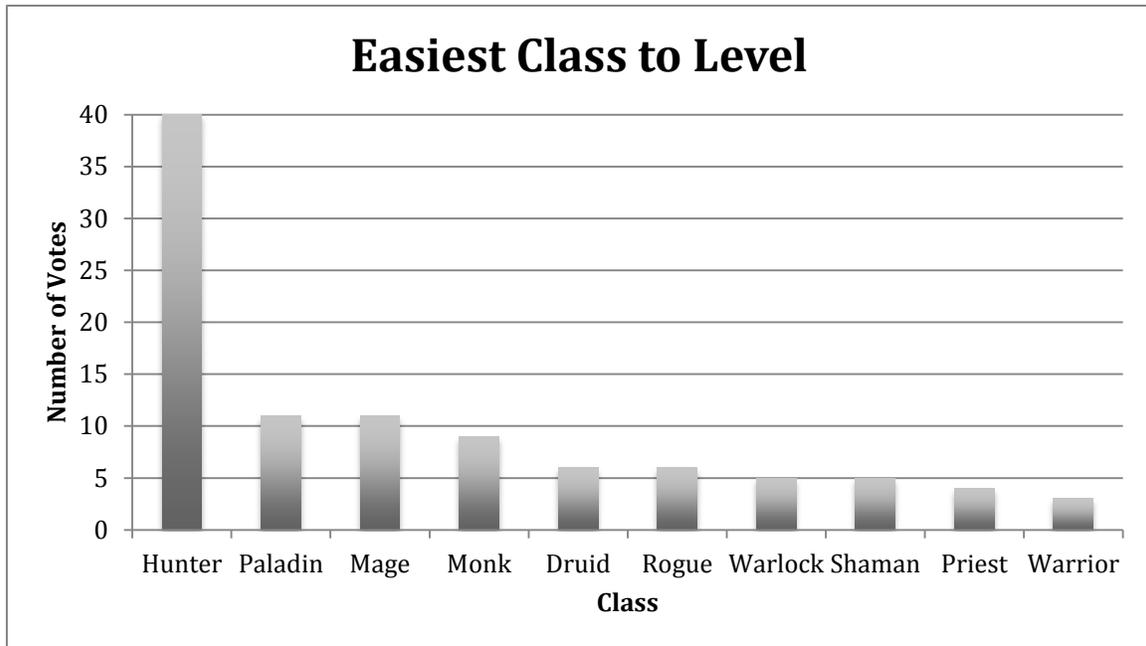


Figure 1

Visually, it is obvious when observing Figure 1 that Hunters were the first easiest. The rest of the classes were pretty close in votes and there are two ties; one is between Paladin and Mage with 11 votes and the other is Druid and Rogue with 6 votes. It came to our attention that there definitely could be response bias in the forum posts. We calculated the amount of times that people voted their own class as the easiest class to level and came up with results shown in Table 2.

People that Said their Own Class		
RANKING	CLASS	Probability
#1	Monk	1
#2	Hunter	0.578947368
#3	Mage	0.555555556
#4	Shaman	0.5
#5	Paladin	0.454545455
#6	Druid	0.307692308
#7	Rogue	0.266666667
#8	Priest	0.25
#9	Warrior	0.142857143
#10	Warlock	0

Table 2

Table 2 shows that of the top four classes that were voted the easiest to level, three of them had the highest probability of saying their own class is the easiest to level. We can determine that there is a strong correlation between the perceived easiest class and the probability that people playing those classes will vote for their own class.

For the Hardest Class to Level data gathered from the forums (n=80), we tallied and ranked classes by the amount of times they were said to be the hardest class to level.

Hardest Classes to Level		
RANKING	CLASS	VOTES
#1	Rogue	23
#2	Priest	14
#3	Mage	12
#4	Shaman	9
#4	Druid	9
#6	Warrior	4
#7	Warlock	3
#7	Paladin	3
#9	Monk	2
#10	Hunter	1

Table 3

The data from Table 3 is both different and similar to the data in the “easiest class to level” category. After data mining the forums, it is clear the Rogue is the perceived hardest class to level in the opinion of users on the forums. Priests are in second and Mages at a close third. However, this data is very fascinating because Rogues ranked tied for fifth in the easiest class to level category but ranked first in the hardest. In addition, Mage was voted the third easiest class to level but voted the third hardest as well. On the other hand, Hunters and Monks ranked tenth and ninth, respectively, on the hardest classes to level scale, which is consistent with the

data that we gathered and analyzed in the easiest class to level category.

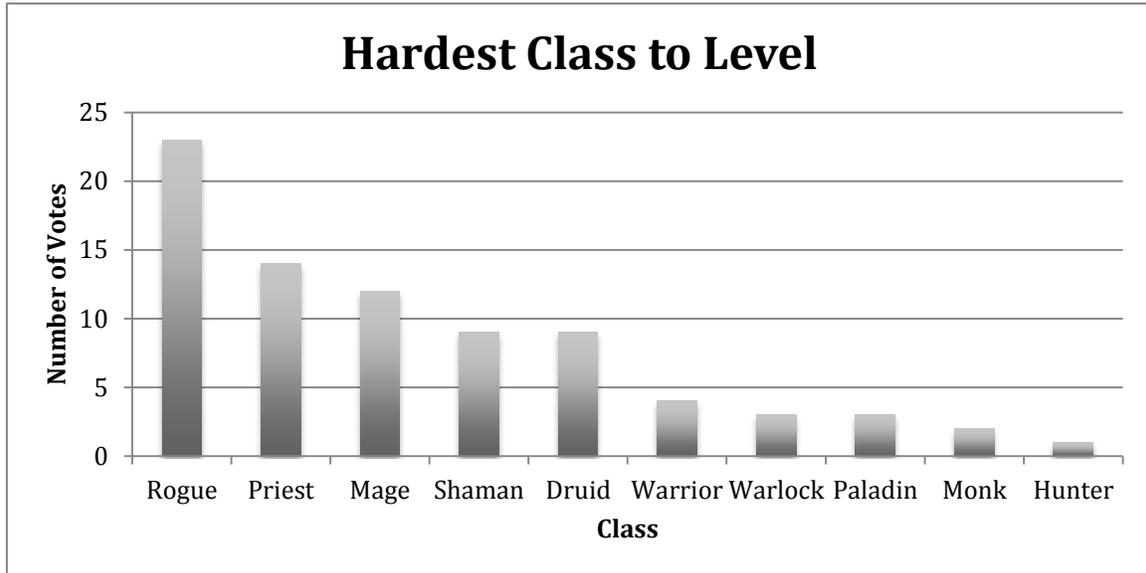


Figure 2

Figure 2 provides a visual analysis for the data pertaining to the hardest class to level from the data we gathered from the forums. The data shown in Figure 2 is much more spread out than that of the easiest class to level. However, there is still a clear first and tenth class, being Rogue and Hunter, respectively.

To observe response bias, we calculated the probability that each class voted for themselves, shown in Table 4.

People that Said their Own Class		
RANKING	CLASS	Probability
#1	Rogue	0.444444444
#2	Warlock	0.428571429
#3	Druid	0.4
#4	Mage	0.333333333
#5	Paladin	0.166666667
#6	Shaman	0.125
#6	Warrior	0.125
#8	Priest	0
#8	Monk	0
#8	Hunter	0

Table 4

The data shown in Table 4 is pretty consistent with the data shown in Table 3. The only major inconsistencies are seen with Priests and Warlocks. Priests are tied for eighth in Table 4 but ranked as the second hardest class to play. This allows us to conclude that the only people who believe that Priests are one of the hardest classes to play are people who don't play a Priest. We do not know what basis they are making that decision on but the only people who voted that Priests are the hardest class to play are people who do not play Priests. The situation for Warlocks is the opposite to that of Priests. People who play Warlocks believe their class is difficult to play, however, people who do not play Warlocks believe that they are not very difficult to level.

After implementing the point system to the interview data, we got the TPV for each class. The highest TPV is the easiest class to level and the lowest TPV is the

RANKING	CLASS	TPV
#1	Hunter	144
#2	Warrior	95
#3	Monk	59
#4	Warlock	48
#5	Druid	34
#6	Paladin	-37
#7	Mage	-76
#8	Shaman	-80
#9	Priest	-90
#10	Rogue	-97

hardest class to level. Our results are seen in Table 5.

Table 5

As shown in Table 5, Hunter is still ranked first easiest to level. In addition, Monks are ranked third and Priests are down at number nine. This is consistent with the other data we have gathered and analyzed. However, it is very interesting to see how in-game players respond versus players on the forums. In-game players

believe Warriors are the second easiest class to level. From the data gathered on the forums, Warriors ranked tenth in the easiest class to level category and sixth in the hardest class to level category. Warriors were the only class in our research that jumped around a lot in each different category. Curious by this, we looked into this phenomenon and determined that this inconsistency can be attributed to the recent game updates and patches. Warriors have recently become a very OP, or overpowered, class. Nevertheless, there could be a lot of other factors effecting players' decisions as to why Warriors are the easiest class to level.

After completing all of our research, we can accurately conclude that Hunters and Monks are the easiest classes to level and Rogues and Priests are the hardest classes to level.

### Discussion

As new expansions and updates to the game are released, each class and their abilities change. The best and easiest classes from 2010 may not be the same as in 2014. After data mining the forums and performing in-game interviews we can conclude that hunters and monks are the easiest classes to level. In addition, we concluded that rogues and priests are the hardest classes to level. Although warriors were ranked one of the hardest classes to level based on the forums, the up-to-date data gathered from the in-game interviews suggests that warriors are currently one of the easiest classes to level. There are many factors that go into a player's decision to choose the easiest and hardest class to play. One WoW player may say a priest is the hardest class to level, but that may be a result of them not being familiar with that class or maybe they have never played a priest. This results

in a research gap in our study. On the contrary, we gathered a data from a total of 230 different people and by observing our graphs and statistics, a clear decision was be made.

Future studies about this topic should gather data from more players, as well as recording the players' decision as to why they choose the classes they choose. Gathering more data will strengthen the study and can make a more concrete decision and ranking of the easiest and hardest classes to level. In addition, adding the "reason why" variable will let future researchers draw additional conclusions about each of the classes.

A new player to WoW should take great interest in looking into this study because it gives a straightforward ranking of each class and can be beneficial to them if they would like to play one of the easy classes or to challenge themselves and play one of the harder classes.

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