`class.`   The *class* of a character specifies that character's role in math formulas. The class of a character is encoded in its mathcode. For example, the equals sign '=' has class 3 (Relation). TEX uses its knowledge of character classes to decide how much space to put between different components of a math formula. For example, here's a math formula shown first as TEX normally prints it and then with the class of each character randomly changed:

$$a + (b - a) = a \qquad a+ (b- a){=}a$$

See page '`\mathord`' of this book for a list of the classes and page 154 of *The TEXbook* for their meanings.