

## Classless Meritocracies

In many societies, especially feudal ones, Status is the primary form of social rank. However, some societies, notably modern and futuristic ones, claim to be “classless.” This does not mean that social rank doesn’t exist! It just means that merit – most often in the form of wealth, education, or public service – replaces entitlement or birthright as the determiner of relative social position.

In a classless society, the GM may wish to limit the amount of Status that PCs can buy *directly* to only two levels. This represents some combination of higher education, professional license (such as in law or medicine), respected family name, and cultural achievements (anything from “rock star” to “poet laureate”). The only way to obtain higher Status is to get it for “free” from high Wealth (p. 25) or Rank (p. 29).

In a society where some form of Rank – not Status – is the official yardstick of power, it takes finesse to turn high Status to your advantage. For instance, you might come from a “good” family and have a decent education, allowing you to buy Status 2 outright. You might also be rich (Multimillionaire 1) for +2 Status and hold local office (Administrative Rank 3) for +1 Status. This would give you Status 5 in total. To overrule a senior bureaucrat with Administrative Rank 6 and Status 2, though, you’ll have to use your social connections. You might have more clout in high society (Status 5 vs. Status 2), but he outranks you in the eyes of the law (Rank 6 vs. Rank 3)!

All the time:  $\times 1$ .

Sometimes (roll of 10 or less):  $\times 1/2$  (round down).

Occasionally (roll of 7 or less):  $\times 1/3$  (round down).

Of course, your reputation extends only within a certain area. If you travel far enough away, the GM may require you to “buy off” the disadvantage points you received for a bad reputation. (There is no corresponding bonus for losing a good reputation.)

### Multiple Reputations

You may have more than one reputation, and your reputations can overlap. The GM should check each one before determining how an NPC reacts to you. Your total reaction modifier from reputations cannot be better than +4 or worse than -4 in a given situation.

### Multifaceted Reputations

A single reputation can give different reaction modifiers with different groups, provided the groups do not overlap. Set the reaction modifier for each group, modify the cost for the size of the group, and then add up the

resulting costs. Modify this total for frequency of recognition. The reputation is an advantage if the net point cost is positive, a disadvantage if negative. The final point cost may be 0, but you should still record it on your character sheet!

*Example 1:* Sir Anacreon has a reputation for fearless monster-slaying. This earns him a +2 reaction from those who recognize him. Everyone has heard of him (no modifier), and he is recognized on a roll of 10 or less ( $\times 1/2$ ). He has a 5-point advantage.

*Example 2:* The Green Dragon has a reputation as a crimefighter. He gets +3 reactions from honest citizens – which is almost everyone except the large class of *dishonest* citizens ( $\times 2/3$ ) – for 10 points. He receives a -4 reaction from the underworld – a large group ( $\times 1/2$ ) – for -10 points. The net point cost for his reputation is 0 points. If his player wished, he could specify a frequency of recognition, but the final cost would still be 0 points.

## IMPORTANCE

Your formally recognized *place* in society is distinct from your personal

fame and fortune. To influence others through established channels (as opposed to relying on popularity or bribery), you must purchase one or more types of social rank, each of which has unique benefits and drawbacks.

## Status

### 5 points/level

Status is a measure of social standing. In most game worlds, Status levels range from -2 (serf or street person) to 8 (powerful emperor or god-king), with the average man being Status 0 (freeman or ordinary citizen). If you do not specifically buy Status, you have Status 0. Status costs 5 points per level. For instance, Status 5 costs 25 points, while Status -2 is -10 points. Status also costs money to maintain (see p. 516).

Status is not the same as personal popularity (see *Reputation*, p. 26) or the popularity of your racial or ethnic group (see *Social Regard*, p. 86, and *Social Stigma*, p. 155). Status can sometimes influence others’ reactions, but its main effect is to spell out where you stand in the social pecking order. In short, Status represents *power*.

### High Status

Status greater than 0 means you are a member of the ruling class in your culture. Your family may be hereditary nobles (e.g., Plantagenet, Windsor), successful businessmen or politicians (Rockefeller, Kennedy), or some other type of big shots. You may even have achieved Status by your own efforts. As a result, others *in your culture only* defer to you, giving you a bonus on all reaction rolls.

High Status carries various privileges, different in every game world; your GM will give you this information. Note that any high-Status person is a likely target for kidnappers and social climbers, and that some criminal types *hate* “the ruling class.”

### Low Status

Status less than 0 means you are a serf or a slave, or simply very poor. This is not the same thing as Social Stigma (p. 155). In medieval Japan, for instance, a woman could have high Status, but still get a -1 on reactions due to the Social Stigma of being female. A modern-day criminal could theoretically have *any* level of Status