



Brent Dill

September 10 ·

So, wacky RPG session from a riff with Anisha and Eliezer:

You have six stats.

Meat is how physically adept your body is.

Brains is how smart you are.

Spark is how "creative", "alive", "aware", "unfettered" you are.

Slack is how "lucky" and "laid back" you are, in the sense that higher Slack scores give you more affordance to roll with punches, AND fewer punches to roll with.

Mana is how much "force of will"/"force of personality" you have.

Class is how well your social aesthetics jive with other people's.

Some zero-sum scenarios:

In a sports competition, the higher Meat will win.

In a chess match, the higher Brains will win.

In a Locked Room puzzle, the higher Spark will win.

When the waiter trips while holding a bowl of soup, the lower Slack will get the soup dumped on them.

When two people each found new start-ups, the lower Mana will go under first.

When two people apply for a job interview (or a loan, or a date, or a scholarship), the lower Class gets rejected.

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Jeff Bergen, Marie La and 33 others



Guy Srinivasan If you haven't read Apocalypse World (or Dungeon World) (or really any of the major variants giving your design brain access to Move technology) you definitely should. Actually here, this meta variant:

<http://fictioneers.net/.../attachments/Simple-World.pdf>

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Brent Dill Doublestat effects:

- Picking a lock is a Meat+Brains roll.
- Surviving in the wild is a Meat+Spark roll.
- Surviving an illness is a Meat+Slack roll.
- Intimidating someone is a Meat+Mana roll.
- Attracting a mate is a Meat+Class roll.

- Inventing a gadget is a Brains+Spark roll.
- Exploiting loopholes in a system is a Brains+Slack roll.
- Winning at strategy games is a Brains+Mana roll.
- Surviving in academia is a Brains+Class roll.

- Making it through a war zone is a Spark+Slack roll.
- Founding a startup is a Spark+Mana roll.
- Creating art is a Spark+Class roll.

- Bumming from couch to couch without losing friends is a Slack+Mana roll.
- Getting into a fancy nightclub is a Slack+Class roll.

- Being a sex symbol is a Mana+Class roll.

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Jacob Czynski Winning a personal fight to be believed by your social group, loser probably gets banished: Slack + Class?

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:25pm



Brent Dill Absolutely Slack + Class.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:26pm



Jacob Czynski Slack + Mana was the other contender. I find Class hard to grok, it feels like two disparate things where one heavily overlaps with Mana.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:29pm




Brent Dill Jacob Czynski Nah. A serial killer has low Class but high Mana.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:30pm




Brent Dill High Mana + low Class almost guarantees that you're a supervillain though.


Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:32pm

 **Brent Dill** Likewise, high Class and low Mana is sort of the Damsel in Distress archetype.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:33pm


 **Brent Dill** Think of Mana as "plot-endorsed Agency". Think of Class as "audience appeal".

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:35pm


 **Jacob Czynski** It *mostly* makes sense, and I get your examples. But it's hard to parse the difference between "I am respected and believed because I belong by fitting in" and "I fit in and belong because I am respected and believed". The first is Class-y, the second seems Mana-y; deciding that your social environment should be X way, and making it so.

Or to frame it another way: you can gain status by being right in the middle of the Overton Window, or you can move the Overton Window to you by exerting status. And there's a lot of situations where I'm not sure which is the operative move.


Like · Reply · September 10 at 10:38pm

 **Brent Dill** Jacob Czynski Yeah. For me, the difference is pretty acutely salient. I think a lot of people maybe just... don't have the same intuitive sense of this stuff that I do.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 10:42pm

 **Jacob Czynski** Yeah, I expect that's true. It's definitely something I think of as your expertise.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 10:45pm


 **Daniel Powell** Dual stat effects aren't additive; they're multiplicative. Alternately, the stats themselves are on a logarithmic scale.

It's slightly more likely to succeed at 'pick a cheap lock' with a meat 3 and brains 3 than with a meat 1 brains 8, or meat 8 brains 1. The technique certainly varies between the three.


But a meat 2 brains 8 lockpick attempt is much better than meat 1 brains 9.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 1:08am


 Write a reply...

 **Annie Kotowicz** "Class" is a good word choice because of the double meaning: social status, and stylish excellence.


Like · Reply · 3 · September 10 at 11:27am

 **Guy Srinivasan** What is it to create a nice staircase with carpentry?

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:29am

 **Brent Dill** That'll be a Spark roll if you've never done it before, or a straight skill check if you're trained in carpentry.


Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 11:32am

 **Guy Srinivasan** Ah, skills too. That works, I had to combine quite a lot of stats otherwise. 😊

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 11:34am


 **Brent Dill** I figure skills are basically just freeform aspect-type thingies.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:35am

 **Daniel Powell** Making it nice would be spark, making it a usable staircase would be brains?


Like · Reply · September 10 at 4:16pm

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 **Jacob Czynski** Whoever statted me in this system was clearly not a minmaxer. Meat 2, Brains 7, Spark 3(EDITED), Slack 6, Mana 4(EDITED), Class 4.

(Depression: status effect, -1 to all stats. Cumulative. Slack save to resist.)


Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 12:17pm · Edited

 **Brent Dill** I'm pretty sure you don't have a higher Mana score than Eliezer.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:43am

 **Jacob Czynski** Hmm, true. Yeah, knock that down a couple notches, I'm not ambitious enough to test the limits so it feels bigger.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:44am · Edited

 **Jacob Czynski** Actually maybe that's affecting everything and I should take them all down a notch.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:46am

 **Jacob Czynski** Knocked down Spark on that principle, I think others were probably right for non-depressed me.

As calibration: Joe Unremarkable Schmuck is 2s and 3s, correct?

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 11:59am



Write a reply...



Annie Kotowicz I tried to rank myself, but got stuck on Class, because the "other people's" part very much depends on "which" people. If I get along amazingly with some people, and am super awkward around other people, is that medium class? Same stat level as being sorta okay around everyone?

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:56am



Brent Dill It's mostly about how people who don't know you would react to you, based entirely on superficial status markers + social instincts.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:56am



Brent Dill Class is how "classy" you are.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 11:57am



Annie Kotowicz People who don't know me can still vary widely in their reaction to me, though... based on their definition of classy, which status markers they value, how close their neurotype is to mine, etc.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 12:00pm



Brent Dill Yup. But you're overthinking this.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 12:00pm



Annie Kotowicz I overthink all thought experiments. Some people love that about me, others not so much. 😊

Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 12:02pm



Rob Bensinger (Warning: anchor)

My guess from interacting with you is that your Class isn't super different from mine? (Mine is a 7, at least according to Brent)

Like · Reply · September 10 at 12:29pm · Edited



Annie Kotowicz That sounds reasonable. 😊

Like · Reply · September 10 at 12:33pm



Write a reply...



Raymond Arnold For frame of reference, what is Duncan's Meat?

Like · Reply · September 10 at 1:15pm



Brent Dill 5.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 2:53pm



Rob Bensinger What's Scott Alexander?

Like · Reply · September 10 at 4:21pm



Raymond Arnold Huh, 5 seems low for Duncan at least normalized against some of the other ranges proposed.

Put another way: what does a 7 and 10 Meat look like?

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 5:09pm



Daniel Powell What range do 90% of humans fit in? (Keep in mind that in with that many stats, people will be outside that band on at least one stat about 40% the time)

Like · Reply · 1 · September 11 at 1:03am



Write a reply...



Anisha Mauze Okay, so here is my understanding of the scale (which I tried to write out in a way that might make it easier to understand how to rank yourself)

0-1 below average

2-3 average

4-5 some effort has been put into this, slightly better than average

6-7-8 noticeably good

9 You have some reputation for the thing

10 you are the person people go to for this and if someone knows one thing about you it is this

- you can't reach above 7 or 8 without generalizing

- If you have a 10 in one skill you probably have 8 or 9 in a related skill, but 7 or less in everything else (specialization)

- People tend to prioritize brains + spark or class + one of the others, depending on who they decide to be early in life

- Meat and brains are easiest to up by sheer force, next are class and spark, and hardest are slack and mana.

Meat: How would you fare in a Battle Royale?

Brains: How good are you at puzzles and strategy games?


Spark: How often do you come up with truly novel ideas?

Slack: If there was a god, how much effort are they putting into your success?


Mana: Could you intimidate someone just by looking at them?

Class: If you started a conversation with someone reading on the bus, how would that go?


Like · Reply · 4 · September 10 at 1:30pm

 **Anisha Mauze** Slack could also be described as "how much of a main character in a feel-good story are you", such that if you have very low Slack, you might actually be the main character in a more gritty, realistic story written by a cynic. In some stories that star the Everyman, a character's Slack might go from 2 to 10 over the course of the story (there is always a significant jump).

Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 1:34pm

 **Anisha Mauze** Villains have low Slack but high Mana. The Final Boss might have a Mana of 9 or 10 but Slack of 1 or 2.


Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 1:35pm


 **Tyler Hansen** ... and in Worm, no cape has Slack above 1.

Like · Reply · 3 · September 10 at 5:20pm

 **Anton Raxacoricofallapotorius Dyudin** Contessa likes using Spark 10 as Slack substitute 😊

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 7:12pm · Edited

 Write a reply...

 **Ozy Brennan** my guess for myself: Meat 1, Brains 4, Spark 5, Slack 7, Mana 0, Class 1. I have been minmaxed


Like · Reply · September 10 at 4:14pm

 **Marie La** Guess for myself: Meat 2, brains 5, spark 5, slack 4, mana 3, class 7

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 4:42pm

 **Brent Dill** That's a different interpretation of you than I had. I'd put you at Meat 3, Brains 7, Spark 7, Slack 3, Mana 1, Class 8.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 5:22pm


 **Anisha Mauze** Yeah, definitely Spark 7 and Class 8

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 6:24pm

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 **Marie La** If I understand slack correctly, steven universe has the most slack

Like · Reply · 3 · September 10 at 4:50pm

 **Brent Dill** Except in the first half of Season 1.

Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 6:25pm


 Write a reply...

 **Roman Davis** Meat: 2, Spark: 6, Slack: 9, Mana: 7, Class: 2


Like · Reply · September 10 at 4:57pm

 **Anton Raxacoricofallapotorius Dyudin** Meat 3, Brains 5, Spark 4, Slack 5, Mana 2, Class 3


Like · Reply · September 10 at 6:54pm

 **Nicholas MacDonald-Wu** Hmm... Meat 2, Brains 7, Spark 6, Slack 4, Mana 7, Class 5. Maybe I'm overestimating myself, though. 😊


Like · Reply · September 10 at 7:02pm

 **Annie Kotowicz** Do the numbers roughly correspond to percentiles, e.g. someone with Brains 7 is smarter than 70% of the population? If so, many of these self-assessments seem surprisingly low to me. Mine (now deleted) was higher overall, but I think I may have been misunderstanding the scale.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 7:15pm


 **Brent Dill** My estimate is that 3-4 is 'average'; 5-7 is 'noticeably above average'; 8-9 is 'wow', and 10 is 'almost inhuman'.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 10 at 7:16pm


 **Annie Kotowicz** Hmm, that doesn't change any of my answers... my self-esteem may be incorrectly calibrated. 😊

Like · Reply · September 10 at 7:21pm · Edited

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 **Olivia Schaefer** Meat 2, Brains 7, Spark 7, Slack 3, Mana 5, Class 3


Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:13pm

 **Leah Libresco Sargeant** A schlemiel has Slack 0. (slack is my favorite of these inventions)


Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 8:36pm

 **Brent Dill** Yes.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:37pm


 **Brent Dill** Wile E. Coyote is a classic example of what happens when Spark 10 combines with Slack 0.

Like · Reply · 8 · September 10 at 8:38pm


 **Stephen Bachelor** Slack high some prior art/inspiration in the Church of the Subgenius.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 11 at 3:37pm


 Write a reply...

 **Justin Bowe** I would've expected you to throw the rules out the window and just run your game. We actually teach Brent Dill Player Agency Theory here in Tacoma.


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 **Brent Dill** *warm feeling* tell me about that, I feel like I need to hear the details.

Like · Reply · September 10 at 8:48pm


 **Justin Bowe** Get your cock sucked somewhere else. HOWEVER, we teach that player agency is the best material DMs have to work with. And you're partially responsible for that.

Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 8:56pm


 **Brent Dill** It's less about cock-sucking and more about having material to work with. I'm trying to teach a bunch of Berkeley techies how to think.

Like · Reply · 2 · September 10 at 9:03pm


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 **Cassandra McClure** This seems fun. Meat 2, Brains 6, Spark 6, Slack 8, Mana 4, Class 5

Like · Reply · September 10 at 10:07pm

 **Elena Churilov** Is this a d6 system? Dice pool?

Like · Reply · September 11 at 10:48am


 **Satvik Souza Beri** Class & Slack seem heavily related on this scale. My guess for my stats is something like high Slack and Brains, medium Mana and Class, low Spark and Meat.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 11:00am

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 **Brent Dill** Huh. To me, Class and Slack are pretty distinct.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 11:00am


 **Annie Kotowicz** Class is how people treat you, Slack is how the universe treats you?

Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:07am


 **Brent Dill** Annie Kotowicz *kind of*, but there's gears.

Class is how much attention and admiration people think you're due. Slack is (partially) how much forgiveness and understanding people think you're due. And Mana is how much deference and obedience people think you're due.

Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:08am


 **Brent Dill** High Class/low Slack means you're expected to be an example for people to look up for, and mercilessly punished when you fail to live up to that. High Slack/low Class means no one takes you seriously, but no one gives you shit either.

Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:10am

 **Brent Dill** This is Slack 10/Class 1:



Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:10am

 **Brent Dill** And this is something like Slack 2/Class 8:



Like · Reply · 2 · September 11 at 11:13am

Brent Dill Like, The Dude just sort of wanders through a potentially lethal plot, never really raising anything to conscious awareness, staying pretty much stoned the whole time - and it turns out pretty much okay. Slack isn't just how the universe treats you - it's also how you *perceive* yourself to be treated. The Dude lost his rug. You know, man, whatever. The Dude abides.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 11 at 11:15am

Brent Dill From another Cohen film, this guy has Class 4 or so, but definitely has Slack 1:



Like · Reply · 2 · September 11 at 11:16am

Satvik Souza Beri Makes sense, thanks for clarifying!

Like · Reply · September 11 at 1:03pm

Brent Dill Another potentially useful insight:

It's probably *easier* for the Dude to be Slack 10 at Class 1, than he would be at Class 4. At Class 4, he'd have too much to *lose*.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 1:06pm

Annie Kotowicz Oh interesting **Brent**, this comment thread changes my Slack self-assessment. I was focusing more on the part about things often seeming to randomly work out well, and less on the part about putting in low effort (and feeling like other people have low expectations). I feel like I do put in a bunch of effort, and things *still* turn out disproportionately well. What Slack level does that put me at?

Like · Reply · September 11 at 7:39pm · Edited

Brent Dill **Annie Kotowicz** That's still high Slack. Slack 10 means you can put in *no* effort and things will still work out great; it doesn't mean that you HAVE to put in no effort.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 11 at 7:39pm

Annie Kotowicz Got it!

Like · Reply · September 11 at 7:40pm

Write a reply...

J. Caitlin Elizondo I love this.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 11:16am

Brent Dill The thing is that the Slack trait actually *has gears*, and those gears are the steelman version of bullshit books like 'The Secret': Don't sweat the small stuff, focus your energy on where it's actually important, and don't show people that shit is affecting you, and people will tend to give you more opportunities to recover than if you freak out and expect that every setback might be lethal.

Like · Reply · 5 · September 11 at 11:18am

Brent Dill Also, keeping your cool is vital to not making bad situations worse. But these are feedback loops - the more bad shit has happened to you, the more primed you are to freak out when further bad shit happens to you, and the harder it is to get into a place where you can recover from further bad shit. Hence Slack is an innate trait.

Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:19am

Leah Libresco Sargeant I think my slack is higher than most people assume, and the results get credited to brains/spark.

Like · Reply · 3 · September 11 at 11:38am

Guy Srinivasan Similarly high Brains can substitute for other things at the short-term expense of fatigue and the long-term expense of having

to make lots of mandatory depression saves.

Like · Reply · 1 · September 11 at 11:46am



Leah Libresco Sargeant Like all people who have worked as stage managers, I had to hit high slack or die 😬

Like · Reply · 2 · September 11 at 11:51am



Daniel Powell All people who have worked as stage managers without having a breakdown, maybe. If such a person even exists.

Like · Reply · September 11 at 2:41pm



Write a reply...



Anton Raxacoricofallapotorius Dyudin Is "Mana" what <http://apenwarr.ca/log/?m=200604#29> here!confusingly calls "Spark"?

200604 - apenwarr

I realize this is Advogato, so you're expecting me to say something about coding. But as I am quickly realizing, poetry is much more relevant to a programmer's life than you might normally assume. So I'm going to just pass along the cheesy poetry people send me; it's really the least I can do. The I...

APENWARR.CA

Like · Reply · September 25 at 8:50pm



Brent Dill Yep!

Like · Reply · September 25 at 10:12pm



Write a reply...



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