

**GURPS®**

Fourth Edition

# *Social* *Engineering*<sup>TM</sup>

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## PULLING RANK<sup>TM</sup>



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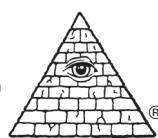
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*An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS®*

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*Gimli: Oh! That's it,  
right! We warned you!  
Prepare to be boarded!*

*Corsair: Boarded!  
By you and whose  
army?*

*Aragorn: This army.  
– The Lord  
of the Rings:  
The Return  
of the King*

## About **GURPS**

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# INTRODUCTION

Not all heroes go it alone! Those in roleplaying games traditionally enjoy the support of fellow PCs – and in settings with even the thinnest veneer of civilization, they often belong to something bigger, be that a government agency, the military, a church, or the mob. *GURPS* offers several social traits that might correspond to such membership, the most important of which are a Patron representing the organization and Rank within that institution. However, these two advantages overlap, and neither completely answers the player's most pressing question: "What assistance can my character request?"

*GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank* solves this problem by merging Rank and Patron into a single concept. In effect, it turns Rank into a "leveled Patron" and then uses its level to determine the odds of receiving a particular form of aid. While not always the most *realistic* approach to organizations, it's a *straightforward* one – and that's often for the best when the heroes are better at smiting evil, arresting crooks, or hunting terrorists than they are at navigating social labyrinths. Still, the extensive advice on what Rank or an equivalent Patron can offer is useful even in campaigns starring thinkers, organizers, and manipulators instead of men and women of action. The rules for treating Rank as an effective Patron are also suitable for such a game or indeed almost any other; while they simplify real-world social complexity, they aren't actively cinematic.

*Pulling Rank* is an optional expansion for the *GURPS Basic Set*, and doesn't rely on *GURPS Social Engineering*. However, as *Social Engineering* offers pricing guidelines for

new kinds of Rank and describes many social feats that high Rank might facilitate, it would be a valuable companion to this supplement.

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank*. It expands on the *Pulling Rank* rules on pp. 24-25 of *GURPS Action 1: Heroes*, the related *Assistance Rolls in Action* notes on pp. 44-45 of *GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, and the generalization of those things under *The Benefits of Rank* on pp. 51-52 of *GURPS Social Engineering*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), *GURPS Zombies*, and the *GURPS Action*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie.



# CHAPTER ONE

# SETTING THE PRICE

When a PC holds down a job, there's usually no need to cast this in terms of traits on the character sheet. **GURPS** assumes that all but the wealthiest or most errant of heroes work for a living. That's why there are pages and pages dedicated to rules such as *Jobs* (pp. B516-517) and *Cost of Living* (pp. B265-266).

However, some adventurers have many, most, or even all of their adventures in service to an organization that's willing and able to support them. Sometimes this takes the form of a Patron (p. B72) or a Contact Group (p. B44), and when the player requests help, the GM rolls 3d against frequency of appearance, with success bringing assistance. In other cases, Rank (pp. B29-30 and **GURPS Social Engineering**, pp. 12-15) fits better, and the GM uses this as a guide to who and what the PC can order around to meet organizational goals. Where things get tricky is when the GM wants a quick-and-easy mechanic like an appearance roll for someone with Rank, seeks to link the degree of aid a Patron provides to the seniority of the person requesting it, or cannot decide which trait better fits a given arrangement.

One possible solution is not to choose, but instead to merge the concepts of Rank and Associated NPCs (p. B31) into a single game mechanic that handles appearance rolls and seniority all at once. In the rules that follow, Rank alone determines

where the PC stands and what he can request, providing him with an *effective* Patron. Readers familiar with **GURPS Action** and/or **GURPS Social Engineering** will recognize this approach, which is functionally identical to (and thus compatible with) similar systems described there – although **Pulling Rank** adds many details, special cases, and examples that merit player-GM discussion in campaigns using those supplements. As with anything that empowers PCs, it's the GM who decides which options are "switched on."

## THE ORGANIZATION

First, find the *base* point cost of a Patron that matches the PC's organization, thinking only in terms of the scope of the aid it could provide:

*Fairly powerful organization* (e.g., obscure organized religion, private charitable foundation, local guild, university, or small-town police department): 10 points

*Powerful organization* (e.g., mainstream organized religion, national nonprofit foundation, regional guild, big-city police department, small national agency, or task force or operational subunit within a large agency or an armed service): 15 points

*Very powerful organization* (e.g., world-class organized religion, international nonprofit organization, international guild, large national agency, or one entire armed service of a small polity): 20 points

*Extremely powerful organization* (e.g., one entire armed service of a large polity) or a *small polity* (barony, principality, poorer modern nation, etc.): 25 points

*Large polity* (historical empire or typical modern nation): 30 points

*When using **Pulling Rank**, the character doesn't pay this cost!* Instead, it determines how much Rank he needs to make something happen and how impressive the response is when a request is granted, both of which increase with hypothetical Patron value. For instance, everybody in a local sheriff's department has a voice, while only senior officers have much say in a national army – but where the sheriff's department would send a lone deputy to search for someone, the army might deploy truckloads of troops equipped with night-vision gear and drones. These considerations don't always affect the price per level of Rank; Rank pricing often has more to do with the social benefits that accrue when not asking for assistance (notably respect, imputed Status, and higher pay).



# PRICING RANK

Next, assess the point cost of Rank in the PC's organization. This is the standard 5 points per level in most cases, but the GM may prefer the detailed treatment of *Rank, Status, and Wealth* (*GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 12-15). In general, Rank that stands in for a Patron should cost *at least* 2 points per level, because anything smaller suggests the kind of organization that can't project power. For a noteworthy exception, see *Common Courtesy* (p. 9).

Cost per level of Rank isn't always linked to hypothetical Patron value, but extremely weak or powerful Patrons sometimes merit cheaper or more expensive Rank. It's best to stay within the ranges suggested on the *Patron-to-Rank Table* and *Rank-to-Patron Table* (below). However, nothing will break too badly if the GM rules otherwise.

## Enhancements

It would be reasonable to ask whether Rank should cost more in cases where a similar Patron would require Special Abilities (+50% or +100%) or Highly Accessible (+50%). The answer is that Rank *does not* rate such modifiers except where the assistance it brings or the accessibility of that aid stems from a monopoly that lets those with Rank function at a higher effective TL than the setting norm. It's fair to increase point cost by the relevant percentage in such cases. The most likely candidate here is Rank (typically Magical or Religious) associated with *Supernatural Aid* (p. 17) next to which the game world's other occult powers pale to insignificance, but unusually advanced technology also counts.

*Example:* Federal officials in the U.S.A. buy Political Rank at 5 points/level whether the year is 2013 (requests zip through fiber and satellites, help arrives in speedy aircraft), 1913 (requests go by wire, help comes by train or clunky auto), or 1813 (fast horses all around). That's because *everybody* with Political Rank in those eras deals with the same conditions. However, Rank in an organization that has satellites, telegraph, or horses – or for that matter, telepathy – in a world that otherwise doesn't might cost 50% more. Rank in one that wields resources that would be "miraculous" in the background (be those jets in 1913, cars in 1813, or acts of God in any era) would be worth *at least* 50% more.

## Limitations

The limitations for Patron suit Rank even less often than the enhancements do. Secret specifically forbids the direct requests for aid that are the whole point of *Pulling Rank*, so it's right out. However, something akin to Minimal Intervention or Unwilling might fit an organization that places its needs ahead of those of

members who are in dire straits. If the GM permits this, note it as "Capricious Assistance, -50%," which reduces the cost of Rank. It means that only assistance rolls (below) that succeed by 5+ summon the requested aid without complication. Success by 0-4 brings either the desired help along with a minor downside *or* something that, while beneficial, wasn't what was asked for; failure by 1-4 brings either nothing *or* a minor, unpredictable benefit that's outweighed by an accompanying drawback; and failure by 5+ or critical failure spells disaster ("Agent Smith requests assistance with the aliens. We recommend nuking the area from orbit.").

## THE ASSISTANCE ROLL

Now divide base Patron cost by per-level Rank cost and drop all fractions to find the Rank *roughly* equivalent to a Patron that appears on 9 or less.

*Example 1:* A small-town police department is a base 10-point Patron. Police Rank there costs 4 points/level: 1/level for hierarchy, +1/level for chain of command, +1/level for typical resources, and +2/level for legitimacy – but -1/level because it *isn't* unique (regional and national forces overlap its jurisdiction). Since  $10/4 = 2.5$ , Rank 2 marks the level where a cop could get help on 9 or less.

*Example 2:* A national agency like the FBI is a base 20-point Patron. Police Rank in such an organization costs the usual 5 points/level – it *is* effectively unique. Dividing 20 by 5 yields Rank 4. Bringing such a large agency's might to bear on 9 or less calls for a person with more clout!

*Example 3:* The *GURPS Action* rules assume a 15-point Patron, like a big-city police force, a commando unit, or a special branch of a large agency. Rank costs the standard 5 points/level in *Action* because unique or not, it's the only Rank that *matters* in an action plot! Thus, Rank 3 is comparable to a Patron that helps on 9 or less.

Appearance rolls based on Rank – called *assistance rolls* to differentiate them – fan out to either side of this key level: each Rank *above* that level gives +1 when rolling to request aid, while each Rank *below* that level gives -2 (if using fractional Rank, a step down of 0.4 or smaller gives just -1). The *Assistance Rolls Table* (p. 6) summarizes the results for the recommended combinations of Rank and hypothetical Patron value. Keep track of even very low or high assistance rolls, as modifiers often apply (see *Assistance Roll Modifiers*, pp. 9-11). The lowliest peon might successfully request help in a favorable situation, while the boss of bosses could be out of luck in an unfavorable one.

Again, remember that the PC doesn't buy an explicit Patron! Patron costs serve only to assess assistance rolls here.

**Patron-to-Rank Table**

<b>Effective Patron Value:</b>	<b>10 points</b>	<b>15 points</b>	<b>20 points</b>	<b>25 points</b>	<b>30 points</b>
Rank Cost Range:	2-5 points/level	3-7 points/level	3-10 points/level	4-10 points/level	5-10 points/level

**Rank-to-Patron Table**

<b>Rank Cost:</b>	<b>2 pts./level</b>	<b>3 pts./level</b>	<b>4 pts./level</b>	<b>5 pts./level</b>	<b>6-7 pts./level</b>	<b>8-10 pts./level</b>
Effective Patron Range:	10 points	10-20 points	10-25 points	10-30 points	15-30 points	20-30 points

What appears on the character sheet is Rank. However, it's useful to annotate this with the base Patron cost and assistance roll, as many rules in Chapters 2 and 3 refer to these numbers.

*Example 1 (cont'd):* A small-town cop with Rank 2 would get Police Rank 2 (Town PD; 10 points; 9 or less) [8]. The most senior guy in town probably wouldn't enjoy better than 12 or less odds, corresponding to Police Rank 5 (Town PD; 10 points; 12 or less) [20]. These traits approximate Patron (Fairly powerful organization; 9 or less) [10] and Patron (Fairly powerful organization; 12 or less) [20], respectively.

*Example 2 (cont'd):* A senior FBI officer with Rank 4 might merit Police Rank 4 (FBI; 20 points; 9 or less) [20]. One with Rank 2 would rate Police Rank 2 (FBI; 20 points; 5 or less) [10]. These advantages are roughly equivalent to Patron (Very powerful organization; 9 or less) [20] and Patron (Very powerful organization; 6 or less) [10], respectively.

*Example 3 (cont'd):* An **Action** cop with Rank 3 would possess something like Police Rank 3 (Special Task Force; 15 points; 9 or less) [15]. His sidekick might have only Police Rank 1 (Special Task Force; 15 points; 5 or less) [5]; his boss, Police Rank 6 (Special Task Force; 15 points; 12 or less) [30].

## Assistance Rolls Table

Equivalent Patron	Rank*								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Rank [2/level]</b>									
10 points	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12
<b>Rank [3/level]</b>									
10 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 points	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12
20 points	-3	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11
<b>Rank [4/level]</b>									
10 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
15 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
20 points	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12
25 points	-3	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11
<b>Rank [5/level]</b>									
10 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
15 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
20 points	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13
25 points	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12
30 points	-3	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11
<b>Rank [6/level]</b>									
15 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
20 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
25 points	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13
30 points	-1	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12
<b>Rank [7/level]</b>									
15-20 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
25 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
30 points	1	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13
<b>Rank [8/level]</b>									
20 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
25-30 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Rank [9-10/level]</b>									
20-25 points	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
30 points	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14

\* See *Limits on Rank* (pp. 7-8) for important notes regarding Rank 0 and the maximum Rank allowed to PCs.

These would come closest to Patron (Powerful organization; 9 or less) [15], Patron (Powerful organization; 6 or less) [8], and Patron (Powerful organization; 12 or less) [30], respectively.

As the examples show, Rank and Patron pricing don't always line up exactly. That's fine! Assistance rolls are subject to so many modifiers that small discrepancies tend to come out in the wash.

## LIMITS ON RANK

The GM won't want every player claiming Rank 0 to enjoy the benefit of a Patron for 0 points. An upper limit on how many levels of Rank are available to starting PCs is also recommended, to keep the solution to every problem from becoming a boring "I have my people take care of it."

### Prerequisites for Rank

While Rank 0 costs 0 points, it's never free for the taking. All kinds of Rank require at least one of the following prerequisites from anyone who would claim it, even at level 0.

#### Advantage Requirements

Having Rank often means purchasing another advantage first. For organizations in which this is the case, every single member – without exception – must possess that trait, which grants Rank 0 and allows one to buy Rank 1+ at the usual cost. Examples include:

*Claim to Hospitality* (p. B41): Merchant or Guild Rank may be restricted to members in good standing, who must have a 5- to 10-point Claim to Hospitality with their fellows. The dependency here isn't, "I'm a member of the profession, so I merit hospitality," but, "I treat fellow professionals with due respect, so they support me" – that is, what matters is the *reciprocal* relationship. Turning down requests from others may mean losing not only the Claim to Hospitality but also *all* Rank, including Rank 0!

*Clerical Investment* (p. B43): Nearly all forms of Religious Rank require this trait – it's normally the only way to get Religious Rank 0+.

*Legal Enforcement Powers* (p. B65): Just about all kinds of Police Rank call for this advantage (as do many types of Security Rank, where that's defined separately). Nobody receives Rank 0+ without a badge, so to speak.

*Legal Immunity* (p. B65): This might be a prerequisite for almost any kind of Rank in a society where people with such Rank are accountable only to superiors who possess higher Rank. The situation is similar to that for Claim to Hospitality – the deal isn't, "My superiors support me, so I can sidestep ordinary laws," but, "I answer to my superiors, so they support me." Examples include Administrative Rank where it represents diplomatic office, Feudal or Political Rank anywhere that rulers are answerable only to their peers, Organized Crime Rank in corrupt societies, and Security Rank in oppressive ones.

*Social Regard* (p. B86): If an institution admits only a favored demographic group, then this advantage becomes a prerequisite for any associated Rank. Typical cases are Social Regard (Respected) as a requirement for Feudal or Political Rank in societies in which rulers must come from a specific caste, and Social Regard (Venerated) in societies where the Administrative

Rank held by judges or the Administrative or Political Rank accorded to senators is the preserve of the elderly.

*Tenure* (p. B93): If Academic Rank exists and has real power, it may require Tenure. Not all Tenure is scholarly, though! In polities where certain officials are appointed for life, Tenure might represent office while Administrative or Political Rank – sometimes informal, but never ignored – signifies relative standing, with most such people holding Rank 0.

*Unusual Background* (p. B96): Some organizations award Rank on weird or arbitrary grounds: born on an auspicious day, chosen by the Secret Masters, or whatever. Where Unusual Background reflects a literal accident of birth, it best suits Magical or Religious Rank; where it corresponds to some conspiracy's ultra-black equivalent of Legal Enforcement Powers or Legal Immunity, it might enable another sort of Rank. Whatever the case, the Unusual Background places the associated Rank in the category of "special abilities that are not widely available in the game world."

*Duty, Honor, Country.  
Those three hallowed  
words reverently dictate  
what you ought to be,  
what you can be,  
what you will be.*

– Gen. Douglas MacArthur

#### Duty

Most forms of Rank imply a Duty (p. B133). This is usually all that's needed to justify Military Rank 0 – though even unimpressive militaries are very powerful organizations, and Rank 0 is likely to mean an assistance roll of 1 or worse before modifiers. Private soldiers cannot expect the army to do their personal bidding!

Duty used to justify Rank often accompanies an advantage requirement. Notably, law-enforcers with Police Rank (or Security Rank) nearly always need Duty *and* Legal Enforcement Powers. A two-pronged arrangement is also standard for anyone who buys Legal Immunity, Social Regard, or Tenure as a prerequisite for Administrative, Feudal, or Political Rank of some sort – their privileged social position (the advantage) is given in exchange for a commitment (the Duty), and relative standing (Rank) comes on top of both. A notable exception here is Claim to Hospitality; as that trait *already* incorporates built-in social obligations, don't assess a further Duty when using it as a prerequisite for Rank.

The frequency of any such Duty is up to the GM, but is by-and-large independent of assistance roll. In general, it should be at the 9 or less level or above – but some sinecures (notably those associated with Tenure) make few demands and might rate only 6 or less. The only hard-and-fast restriction is that the Duty can't be *less* frequent than the assistance roll for Rank 0. For instance, if the GM really wants to allow Rank 1 to give a 9 or less assistance roll, then Rank 0 would give 7 or less, so Duty would bottom out at 9 or less, not 6 or less.

Mere *having* a Duty isn't enough, however. The PC must also *honor* it. Failure to do so (insubordination, dereliction, etc.) is likely to cost him some or all of his Rank. He might even be discharged, in which case he'll lose Rank 0 and any required advantages associated with it.

**Other Disadvantages:** Because this is largely a matter of honor, the GM may opt to replace Duty with Code of Honor, Disciplines of Faith, Sense of Duty, or Vow. In that case, being caught violating this oath has the same effect as failing to uphold a Duty.

## High Rank

The trouble with allowing high Rank to PCs when using **Pulling Rank** is that easily made assistance rolls can be adventure-breakers – rather than do things themselves, the heroes may be tempted to send a runner or make a phone call, whereupon

the interesting bits happen “off screen.” How anticlimactic! Thus, the GM might want to set a ceiling on the Rank available to *starting* characters. A suggestion is to cap it at the level that would give an unmodified assistance roll of 10 or less, or 50/50 odds of obtaining basic aid.

*Example 1 (cont'd):* For small-town cops, the GM might cap starting PCs at Police Rank 3 [12].

*Example 2 (cont'd):* For FBI agents, the GM might limit starting PCs to Police Rank 5 [25].

*Example 3 (cont'd):* For **Action** cops, the GM might restrict starting PCs to Police Rank 4 [20].

This recommendation doesn't override the GM's feelings about how plausible it is for senior organization members to become entangled in risky adventures. For instance, while an FBI officer with Rank 5 is unlikely to break the campaign with assistance rolls, the GM may feel that Rank 2 is as high as makes sense in the field. Thus, he might prohibit PCs from starting out as Rank 3+ administrators.

Such limits don't prevent PCs from earning high Rank *in play*. If the GM uses *Social Traits as Rewards (GURPS Social Engineering, p. 17)* and/or makes *Promotion (Social Engineering, pp. 50-51)* a regular part of the campaign, adventurers can eventually move past the starting restrictions. Of course, this will broaden the campaign's scope, altering what constitutes an “adventure”!

# Kinds of Rank

Rank is always in a specific organization, and priced as befits that institution's reach (see pp. B29-30 and **GURPS Social Engineering**, pp. 12-15). Its point cost is more important than its name, the latter simply being a reminder of what it represents. Don't hang too much importance on the label – one nation's Political Rank might be another's Administrative Rank!

Still, suitable names add flavor, make it easier to identify what kinds of aid make sense, and help differentiate between PCs (or offices held by the *same* PC). Here are some suggestions name-dropped throughout **Pulling Rank**:

**Academic Rank:** Tenured staff of a scholarly institution. Only reaches 2+ points/level and functions like a Patron if that organization regularly funds research, travel, etc.

**Administrative Rank:** Civil servants, diplomats, judges, etc. There are often *many* sorts, so the GM may further distinguish Civil Rank, Diplomatic Rank, Judicial Rank, etc.

**Feudal Rank:** Ruling-class individuals in an aristocracy, whose nominal organization is *the state itself*.

**Guild Rank:** Tradesmen who legally control a profession. Often amounts to Merchant Rank subdivided by trade.

**Intelligence Rank:** Intelligence agents – spies – in societies that formally acknowledge such and don't consider them soldiers (with Military Rank) or police (with Police Rank).

**Magical Rank:** Members of an organized society of wizards. This ranges from Guild Rank in the Wizard's Guild to de facto Feudal or Political Rank in a thaumatocracy.

**Merchant Rank:** In some cases, merchants who belong to a strong cabal or run a corporate state (becomes Guild

Rank when subdivided by trade); in others, merchant mariners (akin to Military Rank).

**Military Rank:** Military personnel (air force, army, coast guard, marines, navy, etc.), plus intelligence and security agents who answer to military commands.

**Organized Crime Rank:** Members of formal criminal empires. The GM might specify Mafia Rank, Thieves' Guild Rank, etc. In fantasy, this is often a variety of legitimate Guild Rank!

**Police Rank:** Employees of police and sheriff's departments, and federal law-enforcement bureaux, as well as correctional officers, marshals, and civilian counterintelligence and security personnel.

**Political Rank:** Administrative Rank for representatives, senators, etc. whose nominal organization is *the state itself*, not some specific branch.

**Religious Rank:** Clergy of recognized religions. May be spiritual leaders, lay administrators (who might have Lay Rank to distinguish them), or theocrats (with the functional equivalent of Feudal or Political Rank).

**Security Rank:** Counterintelligence and counterterrorist personnel – or secret police – where such individuals aren't considered soldiers (with Military Rank) or police (with Police Rank).

**Servant Rank:** Staff of a large household. Only reaches 2+ points/level and functions like a Patron for a *ruler's* household, at which point it differs little from Administrative Rank in a specialized government department or Military Rank in an honor unit.

# CHAPTER TWO

# ASKING FOR HELP

When a player wants to exploit Rank that functions like a Patron, it's time to make an *assistance roll* (AR). As discussed in Chapter 1, this is similar to the appearance roll for an Associated NPC (see *Frequency of Appearance*, p. B36). It isn't the same, however – there are several important differences.

## Organization's Accessibility

The player may attempt an AR whenever the PC contacts the organization behind the Rank, not just once at the start of the adventure – though repeated rolls yield diminishing returns (see *Situation*, p. 10). Contact requires the petitioner to be in circumstances where he could visit his backer in person or send word by messenger, mail, or telecommunication. If he's stranded on a remote island, imprisoned by his Enemy, etc., then he's out of luck unless he manages to gain access to a suitable means of communication – be that smoke signals, phone, radio, or some form of telepathy. Cosmetic details may vary, but ease of access should be comparable for *all* organizations in the setting whose Rank cost hasn't been increased to reflect being exceptionally easy to reach (see *Enhancements*, p. 5).

If the PC is incapacitated, he's usually out of luck! However, if someone with Rank is long overdue, the GM might make an AR to determine whether his organization decides to search for him (see *Rescue*, pp. 17-18).

## Petitioner's Standing

The person asking must be in good standing with his organization, defined as follows:

- He must currently hold Rank! Rank 0 will do, and even Courtesy Rank may suffice (see *Common Courtesy*, below).
- If his Rank requires a Duty, he must possess and be performing this. Failure to carry out such a Duty might not cost him Rank but *will* wipe out the privilege of trying an AR – the shirker is “under review,” “on probation,” or whatever suits his organization’s way of doing business.
- He must be in his organization’s good books regardless of the traits on his character sheet. If he’s guilty of betrayal or if his last AR was grossly inappropriate (e.g., resulted in war crimes or heresy), and if those who bestowed Rank on him suspect as much, then the affront counts as dereliction of duty even if he has no formal Duty, Sense of Duty, etc.

## Basis

The roll is based on Rank (see *The Assistance Roll*, pp. 5-7) and subject to *Assistance Roll Modifiers* (below).

## Effects and Duration

The resulting aid is specific, and lasts only for as long it takes for the organization to render it fully. Where a successful appearance roll for an Ally or a Patron might result in vague general assistance of adventure-long duration, an AR never works this way, even on a critical success.

## Common Courtesy

*Pricing Rank* (p. 5) recommends that Rank should cost at least 2 points/level before it functions as the equivalent of a Patron. However, a customary privilege of Courtesy Rank (p. B29) – at just 1 point/level – is access to certain benefits of membership in the organization which grants it. Thus, a person with *any* level of Courtesy Rank may attempt an assistance roll as though he had Rank 0, even if he lacks the usual requirements (advantages, Duty, etc.). If the GM agrees that the requested assistance would be strictly ceremonial (such as an invitation to a formal event), he may roll as if his Rank were equal to his *full* Courtesy Rank. A retired military officer won’t have trouble getting into the Commandant’s Ball, but he can’t call up armed soldiers to do his personal bidding!

## ASSISTANCE ROLL MODIFIERS

While the basic target number for an AR depends on Rank (see the *Assistance Rolls Table*, p. 6), there are often modifiers. The GM has a lot of leeway here but should always inform the player of all applicable adjustments – especially penalties, *particularly* those for “appropriateness” – and ask, “Are you sure you want to roll?” This reflects the fact that the PC will have a sense of what’s likely and appropriate for his organization, not to mention the option of hanging up the phone, tearing up the letter, etc. if he has second thoughts (although the GM may require someone with Impulsiveness to make a self-control roll here!).



## Personal Abilities

Certain traits of the person requesting assistance may adjust the AR under suitable circumstances:

*Charisma:* For requests made face to face (but *not* via telecommunications).

*Reputation:* If the organization formally confers individual Reputation – positive (in the form of medals, achievement awards, recognition for long service, etc.) or negative (notably, permanent reprimands) – add this to the roll.

*Skill roll:* The petitioner may opt to roll against Administration for a written request or Leadership to request help for his team. The GM may permit another skill, where this suits the organization (e.g., Politics to exploit Political Rank or Savoir-Faire (Mafia) to capitalize on Organized Crime Rank) or the specific request (e.g., Merchant to “sell” the organization on a proposal that stands to enrich it, or Writing for a written plea to an individual rather than to an impersonal bureaucracy). However many skills might apply, only one such skill roll is allowed per AR. Critical success gives +2; success, +1; failure, -1; and critical failure, -2.

*Smooth Operator:* For a request being made directly to the person who can grant it.

The GM is free to assess modifiers for other advantages or disadvantages that suit the situation, either as well as or instead of those listed above. Use those traits’ standard skill or reaction

*If you’re in a bad situation, don’t worry it’ll change. If you’re in a good situation, don’t worry it’ll change.*

– John A. Simone, Sr.

modifiers. For instance, if someone with Shyness (Severe) must speak with a new superior to request aid, he might have -2, while somebody making a *Funding* (p. 16) request adds Business Acumen *instead* of Smooth Operator.

## Situation

The GM can assess a modifier of any size for the conditions under which the request is made, but here are some suggestions:

*Previous requests:* -1 per AR after the first made by the individual requesting aid or *his team* (see *Group Assistance*, p. 11) during the current adventure. If the organization behind the Rank assigns missions, the GM might instead interpret this as “during the current *assignment*.” On long adventures or missions that span many game sessions, the GM may prefer “during the current *session*.”

*Request especially appropriate to situation:* +1 to +5.\*

*Request especially inappropriate to situation:* -1 to -10, and failure by 10+ or critical failure means disciplinary action.\*

*Request especially appropriate to story:* +1 to +5.†

*Request especially inappropriate to story:* -1 to -10.†

*Secret request:* If the petitioner wants to use his backer’s assets surreptitiously, he may accept -1 per -3 he inflicts on rolls to discover his request using Accounting, Administration, Criminology, etc. If the request is inappropriate to the situation, discipline follows only if the organization’s auditor succeeds at such a discovery roll. For instance, base AR 15 with -5 for inappropriateness and -2 for secrecy makes the roll 8 or less, but even if this critically fails, an investigator would need a skill-6 roll to learn of the attempt.

\* This refers to *game-world* appropriateness, and is up to the GM. A sorely wounded Military Rank 0 soldier might get +5 when shouting for medevac, while even a Rank 8 general would have -10 to request a nuclear strike “just because.”

† This refers to *meta-game* appropriateness, and is also the GM’s call. If *Guaranteed Assistance* (p. 12) wasn’t part of the GM’s original plan, but the players set things up so well and roleplayed so brilliantly that the GM is inclined to be generous, then a bonus is a fitting reward (fudging the dice works, too, but isn’t acceptable at every gaming table). Conversely, if the player of a high-Rank PC attempts to use an AR to short-circuit drama that would be fun for everyone else, the GM may assess a penalty steep enough to cancel situational appropriateness and then some. Severe failure has no special effect unless the request is also inappropriate to the situation. If the player counters with *Buying Success* (p. B347), fine; that amounts to *choosing* to end up with fewer bonus character points by doing nothing to earn them! These modifiers suit *cinematic* campaigns, and help explain why the lowliest soldier can call in the cavalry after giving his all – and why star-fleet admirals end up wrestling aliens when they could order marines to do it.

## Type of Assistance

Some forms of assistance are inherently easier or harder to obtain. See Chapter 3 for many examples. The modifiers there are often worded in terms of appropriateness to the situation. Unless noted otherwise, these case-specific adjustments for “appropriate” or “inappropriate” requests *replace* the standard appropriateness bonuses or penalties under *Situation* (p. 10) – they don’t stack.

## Other Considerations

The GM may apply any modifier intended for broad classes of skills, especially social skills, where circumstances warrant. Possibilities include:

*Familiarity* (p. B169): After an organization gains the capacity to provide a new kind of aid, the *first* request of that kind is at -2; the *second*, at -1.

*Geographical and Temporal Scope* (p. B176): When asking an organization to project power outside its usual range.

*Language* (p. B23): If the request must go through someone who can’t understand the petitioner well, standard penalties apply (-1 for Accented or -3 for Broken).

*Time Spent* (p. B346): Where a kind of aid specifies a time to *request* or *arrive*, being willing to wait gives the usual bonus, while demanding haste imposes the standard penalty.

Normally, penalties for *Culture* (p. B23) do *not* apply. An organization has an internal culture that supersedes this concern, and anyone with suitable Rank will be familiar with it. There’s only a penalty if the person making the request and the one evaluating it share neither a Cultural Familiarity nor a kind of Rank (see *Mixed Bags*, below).

*Task Difficulty* (p. B345) *never* applies – *Situation* (p. 10) and *Type of Assistance* (above) serve that purpose for ARs.

## SUCCESS AND FAILURE

An AR is a success roll. Luck and *Buying Success* (p. B347) can affect its outcome. If the final, modified target number is less than 3, though, no attempt is possible (don’t roll the dice, apply a -1 to the next AR, etc.). A roll of 17 or 18 always fails. Otherwise:

**Success (including Critical Success):** Brings the specific aid requested.

**Failure:** Brings no aid.

**Failure by 10+ or Critical Failure:** Brings no aid – and if the request rated a penalty for being inappropriate to the situation, it *also* triggers disciplinary action. This can take the form of a temporary or permanent Rank reduction, a pay cut, a fine, or even a prison sentence; see *Job Roll* (p. B516) for ideas. It’s always something *bad*.

In all cases, if the AR took a modifier for one of the options in Chapter 3, it should provide any specific benefits or consequences noted there for success or failure.

## SPECIAL CASES

It isn’t always the case that the Rank of the person making the request is the one to use, though that’s the way to bet.

### Group Assistance

When several PCs with Rank are engaged in a task, an AR may make sense only as an all-or-nothing proposition for the entire group. In that situation, make just *one* roll for the person of *highest* Rank, no matter who does the talking (being able to send subordinates to fetch help is a standard privilege of Rank 1+). Success benefits everyone, inasmuch as that makes sense for the assistance requested. Failure means no aid for anyone. Either way, the attempt counts as a previous request for both the team and anyone in it.

Group size rarely bears on this. People with high Rank are *assumed* to have lower-Rank subordinates, possibly as many as given in *The Arithmetic of Rank (GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 14) – that is, five for Rank 1, 20 for Rank 2, 100 for Rank 3, and so on – and this is one reason why their requests are given more weight. However, if a group has enough members that it would rate a leader who has higher Rank than anyone in it, use their highest Rank +1 for the roll; e.g., five Military Rank 0 soldiers would normally be led by a Rank 1 NCO, so they would request aid as if Rank 0 + 1 = 1. If assistance is granted, it may come with a new leader attached, like it or not!

In a cinematic campaign where the GM wants to give the PCs extra clout just because they’re heroes, he might let *small* groups (say, four or five PCs, regardless of any NPCs) add 1/5 of the total Rank of everyone of lesser Rank, dropping fractions, to the highest Rank. For instance, three Military Rank 1 commandos led by a Rank 3 officer with a Rank 2 second-in-command would roll as if Rank were  $3 + (2 + 1 + 1 + 1)/5 = 4$ . This is *not* realistic, but it can be fun in campaigns where Rank consumes points that could be spent on more action-oriented capabilities.

## Mixed Bags

*Group Assistance* (above) assumes that everyone in the group has the same kind of Rank, if only at level 0. If this isn’t true, follow these guidelines:

- Group AR is unaffected if there’s no logical way for the organization to know that outsiders will benefit – or if they know, but can ensure that the aid will either only benefit people with Rank or be repaid in cash or favors. (Indeed, a shrewd backer might be *more* inclined to help, giving a bonus, if this would put a well-connected stranger in their debt!)

- The request is “inappropriate” (-1 to -10 to the AR) if the outsiders’ presence is known, aiding those people is unavoidable, *and* this would actively go against the current mission, security standards, etc. of the organization behind the Rank.

- Alliances and task forces made up of people from several organizations, all of whom have their backers’ blessing, may use the rules for group assistance as if they all had the same sort of Rank. For instance, a border patrolman who has Police Rank 2, a local sheriff with *different* Police Rank 4, and a military advisor with Military Rank 3, tasked to deal with a border-security issue, would roll as for Rank 4 – and in a cinematic campaign, they might even act as Rank 5.

## Preatuthorized Assistance

When a powerful NPC preauthorizes aid – the PCs are acting on direct orders from the general, the Emperor ordered his staff to give them “whatever they need,” etc. – use the NPC’s (usually higher) Rank for the AR, typically at +1 to +5 for an “appropriate” request. This is most often an ultra-specific one-off; e.g., an airstrike on a well-defined target or an arrest warrant for one particular criminal. Rarely, though, it’s a promise to intervene as needed, in which case penalties for repeated ARs accumulate as the NPC wears out *his* superiors’ or peers’ patience, but accrue separately from penalties to ARs the PCs make without name-dropping.

Of course, when the PCs haven’t paid for the Rank they’re using, the GM is under no obligation to provide assistance. If the plot hinges on a double-crossing NPC promising to use his Rank and then hanging the heroes out to dry, the AR is guaranteed to fail. In that case, the GM might fake the roll for effect, but the conclusion is foregone.

## Guaranteed Assistance

There are also situations where the GM might have an AR *succeed* automatically. If the PCs work for an NPC who’s outranked by no one, then it often makes sense simply to waive the AR. All requests by the person at the top are effectively “appropriate,” for +5. This amounts to an AR against 15 to 20 for the top dog in most hierarchies, which is a nuisance roll.

*Only PCs who are doing what their organization expects of them get guarantees.*

Only roll if the request is so unorthodox, unconstitutional, unethical, etc. that there’s a real chance of failure because of resistance from below.

If assistance is part of the plot – the merchants are *supposed* to receive the money to close the deal they were sent to negotiate, the commandos are *supposed* to exfiltrate by chopper at the end of their raid, and so on – the GM can likewise dispense with an AR. However, he should do this only if the PCs are doing what their organization expects of them. If they’re bent on embezzling the money or stealing the helicopter, make an AR to see whether somebody gets wise to their scheme!

In either case, there’s never any penalty for repeated ARs after a guaranteed bit of assistance. Only apply the -1 per roll after the first when there was actually a roll.

## Outside the Box

While **Pulling Rank** concerns itself chiefly with PCs who hold Rank, its rules and concepts aren’t limited to that context.

### The Organization NPC

Nothing in the *GURPS Basic Set* prohibits NPCs from possessing Patrons or Rank, and this is unchanged when using **Pulling Rank**. While couched in terms of PCs requesting aid, these rules apply equally to NPCs provided that the GM is fair about assessing the modifiers under *Situation* (p. 10). In general, if previous requests penalize PCs on a per-adventure, -assignment, or -session basis, then NPCs who interact with PCs accumulate penalties on the same schedule – such NPCs get *their* tallies reset when the PCs begin a new adventure or assignment, or at the start of each session, as applicable. As for appropriateness modifiers, the GM should avoid assigning these by fiat and stick to the ones called out in Chapter 3. If NPCs need to receive aid as part of the plot, invoke *Preatuthorized Assistance* (above) or *Guaranteed Assistance* (above).

### Patron, Hold the Rank

The GM can use **Pulling Rank** to make Patrons more interesting even when Rank isn’t involved. Like Rank, a Patron often requires a Duty; otherwise, where a rule or a guideline makes no sense without Rank, it’s safe to assume that the associated topic is inappropriate. The GM decides what forms of aid are suitable. Where some detail depends

on the effective Patron’s base value, use the *actual* base value. The AR starts out equal to the Patron’s appearance roll, is subject to all rules and modifiers for ARs (e.g., successive requests are allowed, but at a cumulative -1), and has its usual outcomes on success or failure.

### Getting Pulled

As *Prerequisites for Rank* (pp. 7-8) discusses, Rank usually requires a Duty and may demand a Claim to Hospitality which is reciprocal by nature. When such an obligation arises, the GM may want to consult the examples of assistance in Chapter 3 for adventure ideas: An NPC in the PC’s organization “made his AR,” and now the PC is tasked with arranging aid! If the player handles this especially well or poorly, the GM might give his character a bonus or a penalty on the *next* AR for help that NPC could render.

### Dutiful Associates

Someone may owe a Duty to an organization that isn’t potent enough to rate as a Patron or grant Rank (at least, not Rank worth more than 0 points per level by the math in *GURPS Social Engineering*), but that should plausibly provide *some* aid. Good examples of such groups are pirate crews and private building security. In cases like this, the GM may opt to permit an AR based on *effective* Rank, found by consulting *The Arithmetic of Rank* (*Social Engineering*, p. 14) and looking up how many people the petitioner “commands.”

# CHAPTER THREE

# “REQUEST GRANTED”

People who hold Rank can *ask* for anything. What they *receive* is another matter! The GM should prepare a list of what kinds of assistance each organization can render – that is, what an AR based on that institution’s Rank can achieve – before anyone buys Rank. The examples in this chapter can help a lot with this, but two overarching considerations always apply.

## Type of Rank

The most important factor is the variety of Rank involved (see *Kinds of Rank*, p. 13). The detailed benefits of each form of Rank are left to the GM’s discretion for a couple of reasons. For one thing, there can be serious variations even within a category – judicial vs. diplomatic Administrative Rank, Military Rank in the army vs. the star fleet, Guild or Organized Crime Rank in any of hundreds of syndicates, and so on. For another, what’s possible varies by campaign context, TL, and the organization’s fortunes; e.g., compare and contrast what Military Rank in the U.S. Army means in the late 1800s (early TL6), amid WWII (mature TL6), during the Cold War (TL7), and this week (TL8). Still, *some* generalization is possible, so many of the examples recommend particularly appropriate types of Rank (and some warn against inappropriate sorts).

## Power of Equivalent Patron

If a given form of aid makes sense, the power level identified under *The Organization* (p. 4) will influence how impressive the assistance is. In particular, whenever someone asks for anything more substantial than information, treat the organization as a Patron (p. B72) with material assets appropriate to power level. Some backers aren’t powerful enough to deliver certain kinds of aid that would otherwise be appropriate to the kind of Rank they bestow. This is noted where it’s a concern.

## SAMPLE ASSISTANCE

Below are just a few examples among countless possibilities. In many cases, a block of modifiers follows the description. These pertain to ARs to request that particular kind of aid, and not to any other rolls that might crop up.

## Authorization

Most organizations that enjoy formal, legal authority can invest their people with this. Almost by definition, such assistance rarely suits Organized Crime Rank! *Covert Activity* (pp. 14-15) and *Social Privilege* (pp. 18-19) offer some viable alternatives.

### Entry Clearance

Permission to enter physical premises the organization controls. When the petitioner visits his “native” guildhall (Guild Rank), base (Military Rank), precinct house (Police Rank), etc., he need not attempt an AR to gain access to areas pertinent to doing his job. However, when he turns up unexpectedly at the doors of some other facility, or at a site where the organization merely handles security (e.g., a U.S. Secret Service officer trying pull Rank to enter a building being visited by the President), he must always present proof of Rank (such as a badge, identity card, or signet) *and* succeed at an AR in order to wander around unopposed.

*Modifiers:* +5 for a public site or space (reception area, storefront, etc.), no modifier for a private one (e.g., a base commander’s personal office), and as low as -5 for a secret or *illegal* one (like an unsanctioned torture chamber), though suitable Security Clearance (p. B82) may waive this last penalty. Success at a previous AR for *Introduction* (p. 18) gives +2.

*You serve your master well,  
and you will be rewarded.*

*– Luke Skywalker, in  
Return of the Jedi*

### License

If the organization behind the Rank possesses the authority to undertake an activity or use certain equipment (vehicle, weapon, etc.), then it can obtain the necessary permits for its personnel. This takes negligible time if the institution grants the license requested *and* the individual asking visits in person; otherwise, it takes a day or more.

*Modifiers:* +5 if the organization grants such permits, +2 if it’s the body that enforces them (e.g., police forces that confer Police Rank rarely issue firearms licenses, but since they handle firearms crimes, cops get +2), or no modifier if it merely expedites them for its staff. For equipment, *subtract* the local CR from the AR but also *add* the item’s LC.

## Warrant

Those with Police Rank, certain forms of judicial Administrative Rank, or Military Rank in places where the armed services operate as domestic law-enforcers or security forces can request legal warrants to tap specific phones, search particular premises, detain or arrest named individuals, etc. Such arrangements take time – anywhere from 1d hours if one merely has to find a friendly judge to several weeks if lawyers get wind of it.

*Modifiers:* +1 to +5 for a target “known to the authorities” (Public Enemy Number One would be +5!), no modifier if there’s grounds for suspicion but nothing more, or -5 if the petitioner is acting on a cold hunch and cannot present any evidence or record of prior criminality, terrorism, etc. to back the request.

If the PC is captured, don’t use this kind of AR to pay the ransom. For that, see *Bailout* (p. 17).

## Cover-Up

Hiding the fact that something unpleasant ever happened is a single AR, though in practice it often involves deeds similar to *Bribe or Hush Money* (above), *Disappearance* (below), and/or *False ID* (below) for the people involved – and possibly *Technical Means* (p. 15), *Facilities* (pp. 18-19), or *Specialists* (p. 19) to engineer propaganda, hack computers, and so on. The GM should decide which options would be involved and then make the AR for the *hardest* of these. Success means the cover-up works.

Unlike many covert activities, cover-ups are sometimes possible for those in positions of administrative authority, whether that’s literal Administrative Rank or something like Merchant, Political, or Religious Rank. This remains true even when the elements of the cover-up aren’t individually options for that kind of Rank.

## Disappearance

This is “authorization” to apprehend a specific person *illegally*. It’s only available to those who have some form of legitimate Rank (Military, Police, etc.). The individual(s) asking must do the dirty work, but a successful AR guarantees that they’ll get holding facilities and no legal trouble. For setup time, use the guidelines for *Warrant* (above).

*Modifiers:* -5 if target isn’t an enemy of the state, a known terrorist, or a similarly scary bad guy.

## False ID

*Temporary Identities* (p. B31) are something at which Organized Crime Rank excels, and which spookier forms of legitimate Rank can

sometimes manage. The request might be filled in a day if the ID doesn’t have to pass close scrutiny, but fancier versions with life histories, supporting documents, etc. can take weeks to set up.

*Modifiers:* +3 if the petitioner can provide, or the organization already has, genuine documents to alter; -1 per 5 points in legitimate social advantages (Rank, Status, etc.) which the ID needs and the organization behind it can’t legitimately grant. These stack – a security service could grant its agent a false ID within its bailiwick at +3 for genuine documents and no penalty for Rank.

## Insertion/Extraction

A *clandestine* drop or pickup, available in a scant 1d+10 minutes for loitering support but taking up to a day on a cold request (for obvious rides, see *Transportation*, p. 19). The means will reflect the equivalent Patron’s assets.

# “Complements of the Boss”

The GM who feels that an AR would result in aid that doesn’t fall into a clear-cut category – or who doesn’t want to bog down play with the details – can allow an AR to act as a *complementary skill roll*. This kind of AR is made to improve the petitioner’s skill roll for a task with which his backer could plausibly assist. Critical success on such an AR gives a skill bonus equal to 1/5 of equivalent Patron point value, success gives half that (round down), failure gives -1, and critical failure gives -2.

Equivalent Patron	Critical Success	Success	Failure	Critical Failure
10 points	+2	+1	-1	-2
15 points	+3	+1	-1	-2
20 points	+4	+2	-1	-2
25 points	+5	+2	-1	-2
30 points	+6	+3	-1	-2

These modifiers abstract the effects of an unspecified combination of material and human resources, social string-pulling, and information on the undertaking with which assistance was requested. The skill to which they apply must suit the organization providing the aid. For instance, an AR for an intelligence service that offers *Technical Means* (p. 15) could complement a roll against Intelligence Analysis or Strategy, while one for mobsters capable of *Violence* (p. 19) could complement Intimidation. If anyone asks for details, “You’re not cleared for that!” or “Don’t ask!” is always a suitable answer.

Otherwise, such an AR obeys all the usual rules; for instance, it counts as a previous request that gives the standard -1 to future ARs.

## Covert Activity

Legitimate organizations that protect regional or national interests – including many that confer Military or Police Rank that represents intelligence, counterintelligence, or security authority – can pull some dirty tricks. Those that offer Organized Crime Rank can swing some of these favors, too!

## Bribe or Hush Money

When an NPC demands material compensation for *illegal* services rendered, and the Rank-granting organization is one that could believably deal with him directly, roll as for *Cash* (p. 16). However, the effective amount available is 10 times usual, exactly as when acquiring cash for show – the backer might be paying off the crook in kind or in favors, and in any event isn’t taking the risk of putting a bag of money in the PC’s hands! This is most often a function of Organized Crime Rank, but may be available to conspirators with Guild or Merchant Rank.

Organized Crime Rank might be able to swing a getaway car if a 10-point effective Patron or a false-flagged freighter if a 15-point one; fancy stuff such as stealth helicopters and nuclear submarines fitted for special-ops infiltrations require Military Rank, and a 20- to 30-point effective Patron.

## Safe House

Many kinds of Rank might give a safe place to hide out – Organized Crime Rank and espionage-oriented Military Rank qualify for sure, as might diplomatic Administrative Rank, Guild or Merchant Rank in organizations that own lots of property, and Religious Rank in settings where holy ground is sanctuary. The archetypal safe house is unknown to the opposition, checked for traitors (if staffed) and bugs (at higher TLs), and stocked with food and medical supplies. In town, the building might be 3d minutes away (by car at TL6+, on foot at lower TLs); in the countryside, the hero will probably be directed to the nearest good-sized community.

## Technical Means

Rank in government organizations that are effectively 20- to 30-point Patrons may let PCs request the use of powerful espionage assets at TL6+ (or at *any* TL, if magic exists). This includes communications intercepts for a particular target, code-breaking using a supercomputer, and drone or even satellite recon of a specific locale. Most such requests take a day or longer to process – often after another day or more to travel by courier, if electronic communication isn't possible.

Less impressive organizations, like police forces that grant Police Rank and work like 10- to 20-point Patrons, can manage considerably more modest technical means, such as helicopter surveillance and access to traffic cameras. Modern universities, which confer Academic Rank comparable to a 10-point Patron, can sometimes accomplish surprising things with computing facilities. Such lesser aid can be set up in minutes to hours (call it 1d minutes or hours, if desired).

*Modifiers:* -1 to -5 for expensive, highly sensitive assets like satellites and Top Secret code-breaking machines, unless the person asking has appropriate Security Clearance (p. B82) in addition to Rank. No modifier for ordinary drones, helicopters, cameras, etc.

## Information

Most organizations have access to a great deal of useful information. In all cases, the petitioner may collect this in person, or have it delivered by courier or electronically, as TL permits. This might take only as long as is needed to walk up to a desk, place a phone call, or send email. Waiting for a courier to deliver data takes the usual travel time from the organization's nearest base (call it a day if this isn't known).

## Consultation

If the PC is merely asking a factual question, treat his organization as a Contact Group (p. B44) with an effective skill of 15+ (equivalent Patron value/5) – that is, from 17 to 21 – in any skill that seems applicable. This might mean Administration or

Accounting for Administrative Rank, Finance or Market Analysis for Guild or Merchant Rank, Tactics or Strategy for Military Rank, Streetwise for Organized Crime Rank, Criminology or Forensics for Police Rank, or almost *anything* for Academic Rank. A successful AR allows a skill roll, subject to that skill's usual modifiers, with any success giving the PC what he needs to know. In effect, his Rank replaces a collection of skills he might lack.

Reliability is “Somewhat Reliable,” meaning that on a failed skill roll, the information just isn't available. On an 18, someone decides that the request was above the PC's clearance or pay grade! Instead of aid, investigators show up to complicate the adventure.

## Helllllp!

When the *player* isn't sure what to request, “I leave that to the organization” is a valid option. Make an *unmodified* AR and handle the outcome exactly as if the Rank were limited with Capricious Assistance (see *Limitations*, p. 5). Petitioners who already have that limitation get the usual proportion of good to bad but give up all say in the good part! On a success, the aid should be no better than what an AR at a penalty equal to the margin would have brought. If several options fit, the GM chooses randomly or picks whatever suits the story.

*Example:* A detective who's “off the reservation” gets into a shootout. He calls the PD on his cell phone and shouts for help. Failure by 5+ might see him wake up after medevac (*Evacuation*, p. 17) to the voices of internal affairs men talking about disciplinary action. Success by 5+ might score assistance comparable to an AR at -5 – perhaps the SWAT team turns up even though he's disobeying orders (*The Cavalry*, p. 19). Intermediate results are likely to have a mixture of upsides and downsides.

## Files

This means any dossiers, manuals, maps, etc. that the organization would believably possess. A successful AR produces a copy of the information. Details depend on the kind of Rank. Military Rank might obtain manuals for weapons that force uses, grid reference maps, and *existing* satellite photos (to requisition new ones, see *Technical Means*, above). Police Rank could provide criminal records, service records of other cops, case reports, and so on. In a fantasy setting, Magical or Religious Rank may enable access to books of spells!

*Modifiers:* +5 if the information is widely available and the request is merely to save time, but down to -5 if the files are sensitive (e.g., blueprints for a nuclear weapon or a spell that conjures Cthulhu).

## Records Search

This is a search of *all* the databases to which the organization has access in order to dig up everything it has on record regarding a piece of information – e.g., name, address, license number, phone number (TL6+), or DNA sample (TL8+) – provided by the person who submitted the request. Handle this as *Consultation* (above), but the relevant skill is automatically Research, and what's discovered depends on the petitioner's Rank.

Police Rank would permit a DMV lookup of a plate number to find the name and address of the vehicle's owner, while suitable Administrative or Religious Rank could turn up things like marriage records that prove or disprove inheritance claims.

*Modifiers:* +5 if the information is generally available and the request is merely to save time, but down to -5 if the information is sensitive (like proof that the king isn't legitimate).

## Material Aid

Almost all organizations can provide *some* sort of tangible support. More than most assistance, this is sensitive to hypothetical Patron value!

*Q: It is to be handled with special care!*

*Bond: Everything you give me . . .*

*Q: . . . is treated with equal contempt.*

*– Thunderball*

## Cash

This is cash released for the good of the organization's goals. It's a common benefit of Administrative, Feudal, Guild, Merchant, Organized Crime, Political, Religious, and Servant Rank; occasionally accorded to individuals with Police Rank who can't request *Bribe* or *Hush Money* (p. 14) and so must bribe criminals or pay off spies directly; and *extremely* unlikely for Military Rank in high-tech settings. Unlike most assistance, this is scaled to Rank. Use the following table to determine the maximum cash disbursed as a percentage of campaign starting money:

Rank	Cash	Rank	Cash
0	0.5%	5	150%
1	1.5%	6	500%
2	5%	7	1,500%
3	15%	8	5,000%
4	50%		

Multiply by 10 if the money is for *show* and expected to be returned; e.g., swag put on display by a law-enforcer as part of a sting.

Cash can be collected in person or delivered by courier in a day. In high-tech worlds, it can be deposited electronically . . . if the recipient doesn't mind the digital trail left by a credit or debit card.

*Modifiers:* -4 if effective Patron value is 10 points, no modifier if 15 points, +2 if 20 points, +4 if 25 points, or +6 if 30 points; a bonus equal to the Rank difference when requesting cash suitable to a lower Rank (e.g., a Rank 5 person rolls at +3 when asking for 5%). If the money is being sought for personal

gain, the request is "inappropriate," giving an AR penalty and resulting in disciplinary action on a severe failure. Even a successful scam, if discovered later, will put the guilty individual out of good standing – as will not returning cash loaned for show.

## Funding

Rarely, a Rank-granting institution might entertain suggestions that it spend a *major* chunk of its capital on a large-scale venture such as backing an R&D project or building a new facility. If a character with Rank has such a proposal, he may try an AR to get it approved. Success dedicates up to 1% of the assets of the effective Patron to the cause. The following table gives the multiple of campaign starting money this represents:

Equivalent Patron	Funding	Equivalent Patron	Funding
10 points	10x	25 points	10,000x
15 points	100x	30 points*	100,000x
20 points	1,000x		

\* A 30-point Patron may have "incalculable" worth, but it has a finite funding limit!

This won't be the petitioner's money to spend, but it may give him broader options on future ARs for *Entry Clearance* (p. 13), *Technical Means* (p. 15), *Job* (p. 18), *Service* (p. 18), or *Facilities* (pp. 18-19).

*Modifiers:* -1 to -10 if the organization hasn't issued a call for proposals – and -1 to -5 even if it *has* issued a call, if it's clear that the suggestion is for the petitioner's good but not the organization's. In either case, treat this as the penalty for an "inappropriate" request, with the usual potential for negative consequences. Business Acumen replaces Smooth Operator for all funding requests; see *Personal Abilities* (p. 10).

## Gear

On a successful AR, the petitioner can draw any equipment that's standard issue for the organization *and* his role in it. Collecting it at one of the backer's facilities is fastest. Delivery by courier is an option, but that can take a day or more – or 1d days for large items like vehicles. Some kinds of Rank are more effective here; e.g., Military Rank might obtain gear in the field via an airdrop in just 1d hours, or in even less time if super-science teleportation exists, and Magical Rank could conceivably achieve something similar for a wizard.

"Standard issue" doesn't always mean "ordinary." If the organization has access to experimental or gee-whiz gadgetry, that's a valid request. Mundane equipment has the same value as *Cash* (above) – including the factor of 10 if it will be returned – but tends to be easier than money to request and is often the *only* option for Military Rank.

*Modifiers:* The AR modifiers for cash. For experimental gear with no fixed price tag, ignore \$ value but apply an extra -5 (e.g., -3 for an effective 20-point Patron). Mission-specific gear of any kind almost always enjoys +5 for an "appropriate" request. For instance, a sergeant (Rank 2) in a modern army (effective 25-point Patron) has a base AR of 3, but when requesting an ammo drop for his squad, he'd get +4 for a wealthy backer *and* +5 for an appropriate request, giving 12 or less – rising to 13 or less with a success vs. Leadership.

# Supernatural Aid

People with Magical Rank – or Religious Rank, if priests draw on real divine power – can sometimes obtain assistance that's more than natural. This takes the form of the mundane AR that best suits the desired aid, though possibly with a couple of twists. First, the supplicant might be able to request help through extraordinary channels, such as by praying silently or casting a Communication and Empathy spell. Second, the mechanism of fulfillment may be extraordinary, perhaps even resembling Serendipity (p. B83) when prayers are answered. Either kind of thing should increase the cost of Rank if what's possible outstrips other supernatural abilities in the setting; see *Enhancements* (p. 5).

Examples of supernatural aid include:

- *Consultation* (p. 15) for insight into matters of supernatural significance.
- *Entry Clearance* (p. 13) to *safely* enter a place off-limits to others, such as a cursed temple or tomb.
- *Facilities* (pp. 18-19) for access to sites of superior mana or sanctity.
- *Files* (p. 15) to receive a book of spells, holy writings, etc. – or, with theurgy, to be granted knowledge directly.
- *Safe House* (p. 15) for an area warded against opposing occult forces.
- *Technical Means* (p. 15) to represent magical scrying or divine insight.

- *Treatment* (below) to be cured of afflictions that demand Healing spells.

The GM probably shouldn't permit things like requests for teleportation out of danger (*Evacuation*, below), divine smiting (*Fire Support*, p. 19), and summoned demons (*Muscle*, p. 19), as these would invade the territory of Magery or Power Investiture. For godlike Patrons purchased in levels – with “petition rolls” for aid affected by level, the specific assistance requested, and Religious Rank – use **GURPS Powers: Divine Favor**. Rank is for situations where being a priest or a wizard means access to *places* or *knowledge* that others lack.

Not all Magical or Religious Rank works this way. Realistic Religious Rank is Administrative, Feudal, or Political Rank within a hierarchical church, named differently to distinguish it from temporal versions of such Rank. Even in fantasy, Magical Rank often amounts to Rank in the Wizards' Guild, and functions like any other kind of Guild Rank.

Conversely, in some fantasy worlds, legitimate members of the ruling class – who wield Feudal Rank – enjoy “divine right” despite belonging to an otherwise secular institution (the state). This could manifest in any number of ways, up to and including an AR for *Gear* (p. 16) to pull a sword from a stone!

## Rescue

A benefit of Rank in some organizations is help in times of personal difficulty. Such aid can be requested like any other kind, but the GM may opt to make an AR for it when a member in good standing *doesn't* report in, leading his backer to believe he's missing or overdue.

## Bailout

When legitimate authorities or “honorable” enemies detain someone with Rank while he's following orders, he can “get out of jail free” on a successful AR, provided that his organization could reasonably retrieve him by paying a fee (bail, ransom, etc.) or simply overruling his detention. Payments aren't limited as described in *Bribe or Hush Money* (p. 14) or *Cash* (p. 16), as the whole point is that success frees the PC, whatever it takes: negotiation, prisoner exchange, threats . . . Time required is as little as 10 minutes after a phone call on home turf, but possibly several days otherwise. No AR is needed if the organization accidentally arrests its own member!

*Modifiers:* +5 to accelerate a holding period or other fleeting detention. If the act that led to arrest was particularly heinous, treat the request as “inappropriate” (-1 to -10). Some organizations prefer to wait until trial or another denouement to throw their weight around (e.g., using Organized Crime Rank to buy a judge), while others bargain directly with captors (e.g., using Police Rank to spring someone), and an AR made at the wrong step is at -1 to -5.

## Evacuation

Physically plucking people from danger is a hallmark of organizations that bestow Military Rank and expansive varieties of Police Rank. It also fits the apparatus behind Administrative, Feudal, Political, and Religious Rank, if they regard Rank-holders as VIPs. Evacuation is *overt* and available only in friendly or openly contested territory (contrast *Insertion/Extraction*, pp. 14-15). High-tech help like a helicopter or an ambulance arrives in 1d+10 minutes, but 1d hours or worse is typical at lower TLs or in remote areas.

*Modifiers:* The +1 to +5 for an “appropriate” request always applies if the PC got into trouble on a legitimate mission. If evacuation is because he's injured (medevac), add an *extra* +5, giving up to +10 in total.

## Treatment

If the organization has medical facilities – like most armed services (Military Rank), many governments (Administrative, Feudal, or Political Rank), and numerous organized religions throughout history (Religious Rank) – then a PC who presents himself there or succeeds at an AR for *Evacuation* (above) can make an AR to get treatment for injury, illness, etc. In fantasy worlds, Magical or Religious Rank often gives access to curative magic.

*Modifiers:* +5 for something life-threatening. Apply the +1 to +5 for an “appropriate” request if the condition that requires treatment occurred while serving the organization. These modifiers are cumulative.

*I handed to him the sealed letter which Mr. Hawkins had entrusted to me. He opened it and read it gravely. Then, with a charming smile, he handed it to me to read.*

– Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

## Social Privilege

Organizations can often help by making connections and opening doors. This is more likely for polite backers – ones that *don't* usually offer *Violence* (p. 19) – and especially suitable for Administrative, Feudal, Guild, Merchant, Political, Religious, and Servant Rank.

### Buy/Sell

Some organizations can broker sales of the petitioner's goods or purchases made with his money. This requires an AR based on Merchant or Guild Rank, on a category of Administrative Rank that serves much the same purpose, or on Organized Crime Rank for the black market. Success allows the PC to save time, avoid rolls against skills he might lack (e.g., Finance, Merchant, or Streetwise), and/or operate anonymously (if he wishes).

*Modifiers:* +1 per full 10% of transaction value given to the organization as a finder's fee or a commission, to a maximum of +10; subtract the local CR from the AR, but if the goods aren't stolen, also add the LC of the merchandise.

### Hireling

If the organization keeps track of individuals whom it might employ, then an AR can replace the rolls under *Finding a Hireling* (pp. B517-518) and *Hirelings* (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 22), provided that the desired worker possesses skills that would plausibly be of value to that group. Mercenaries might be available to those with Feudal Rank, craftsmen to people who have Guild Rank, and so on. This is still a *weekly* roll, as usual.

*Modifiers:* Double any bonuses for *advertising* or *money offered* that would apply to a hireling search, and apply them to the AR; e.g., offering 50% more pay gives +4.

### Introduction

Most organizations can give introductions that get their members past their affiliates' gatekeepers (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 47). This doesn't guarantee success at what follows, or even a good reaction – it just means that the person who makes the AR gets the necessary interview.

*Modifiers:* +5 for an introduction to members of the same organization. Success *isn't* automatic even then . . . a Military Rank 0 soldier with this +5 has better odds than most civilians of seeing a general, but a Political Rank 5 person *without* the +5 will probably have better luck!

### Invitation

Your name on the guest list for a social event linked to a Rank-granting institution is a special case of *Introduction*

(above) and/or *Entry Clearance* (p. 13). It's nearly the only situation where full Courtesy Rank counts for an AR; see *Common Courtesy* (p. 9). No roll is needed for an invitation you would normally receive – only for one you wouldn't, so that you needn't "crash the party."

*Modifiers:* +5 if the event admits the public, and this favor takes the form of queue-jumping more than an invitation to something exclusive.

### Job

Rank that represents position but not employment in an organization (e.g., Guild or Merchant Rank signifying membership in a brotherhood of businesspeople rather than a business) can be exploited to secure contracts or employment. An AR replaces the rolls under *Finding a Job* (p. B518) and *Jobs* (*GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 22-23). This is still a *weekly* roll, as usual.

*Modifiers:* Requests for jobs for which the petitioner is qualified are automatically "appropriate," and made at +1 to +5.

### Service

If the organization behind a given kind of Rank offers services that aren't covered by other kinds of ARs – notably, those for *Consultation* (p. 15), *Buy/Sell* (above), *Specialists* (p. 19), and *Shipping* (p. 19) – then anyone with that Rank can find said services without an AR, waiving the rolls under *Services* (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 46). An AR lets him *procure* such a service, provided that it doesn't cost in excess of 10 times the amount noted for *Cash* (p. 16), as when acquiring cash for show.

*Modifiers:* The AR modifiers for cash.

### Technical Assistance

Many organizations have access to material resources that could assist PCs but that aren't money or portable gear. Use these options when a hero requires supercomputer time to do his *own* code-cracking or hacking (contrast *Technical Means*, p. 15), wants a lab or assistants for inventing, and so on.

### Facilities

Any kind of Rank might grant the PC access to superior facilities – tools far beyond the reach of his personal budget – for one of his skills. This can take countless forms, from a powerful "propaganda machine" courtesy of Administrative or Political Rank, through top-of-the-line technology (computers, labs, and workshops) for people with Academic, Military, or Police Rank, to magical or holy sites for Magical or Religious Rank. Heroes who have Feudal, Guild, Merchant, or Servant Rank may enjoy access to ballrooms and similar fancy surroundings that give bonuses to social skills or reaction rolls.

Organized Crime Rank often provides diverse resources, from machine shops for chopping up cars to five-star restaurants for impressing crooked politicians.

In all cases, the bonus on a successful AR equals 1/5 of the effective Patron value, or from +2 (at 10 points) to +6 (at 30 points). However, this cannot exceed +4 for a reaction bonus or  $+TL/2$  for an equipment bonus (see *Equipment Modifiers*, p. B345). The bonus can only be had in person, on home territory, for facilities that make sense; e.g., city cops can access an auto shop but not code-breaking supercomputers.

*Modifiers:* If the skill or reaction bonus exceeds the maximum, treat the excess as an AR bonus. For instance, a large TL8 nation is an effective 30-point Patron that gives up to +6, but when requesting aid to Propaganda (a technological skill, so maximum bonus is +4 at TL8) or reaction rolls, the limit would be +4 and the remaining +2 would boost the AR.

## Specialists

Instead of doing something oneself, one can ask experts to do the job. An excellent example is somebody with Police Rank requesting forensic work: autopsy, crime-scene analysis, DNA test, etc. Treat this as *Consultation* (p. 15), but adjust the time needed to whatever the effort would normally take. The GM should permit ARs only for *routine* undertakings; PCs who want adventuring tasks done, new inventions dreamt up, etc. ought to tackle such matters firsthand.

## Transportation

Any organization that moves around people or goods might do so for its members. See also *Insertion/Extraction* (pp. 14-15) for a *covert* drop or pickup, *Evacuation* (p. 17) for a hasty rescue, and *Gear* (p. 16) to request vehicles for discretionary use.

## Shipping

When the PC wants to ship a fragile or sensitive package, or one that requires tricky paperwork, as part of his mission, he can ask the organization to take care of it. At TL6+, this can often be arranged almost in real time by telegraph or telephone; at lower TLs, it may take several days of waiting for suitable horse couriers, merchant ships, mail trains, and the like. Almost any kind of Rank might grant this sort of aid, but Organized Crime Rank and Merchant Rank are most suitable.

*Modifiers:* +5 if the organization is merely arranging commercial shipping rather than doing the deed itself; subtract the local CR from the AR but also add the item's LC (e.g., shipping LC1 weapons in a CR3 society gives -2).

## Travel

When an organization sends its agent somewhere, don't bother with an AR. However, if an adventurer wants to get from A to B quickly – still as part of his work, but without prior planning – he can ask his backer to arrange ordinary, overt transportation, complete with any relevant papers (tickets, visas, etc.). At TL7+, this can often be arranged in real time over the phone; at lower TLs, it may take several days. The traveler doesn't choose the means, which should be appropriate to Rank (e.g., a bus ticket for an Administrative Rank 0 intern, a private jet for the Rank 8 head of state).

## Violence

Rank is a common feature of organizations that order people into violent situations. Someone with Feudal, Military, Organized Crime, or Police Rank can often count on backup in a fight.

## Fire Support

Those with Military Rank – and almost never other kinds – might be able to call in an air strike, armed drone attack, artillery barrage, or naval or orbital bombardment. If this is preplanned, it may well happen as soon as the signal is received, and the speed limit is that of communications at the campaign TL (and of course the fire itself!). For unplanned fires, the GM should add at least 1d minutes to any delay and/or require the person who requested the mission to make a Forward Observer roll.

*Modifiers:* -5 outside a combat zone, worsening to -10 in friendly territory. The GM should be strict about this, and apply further penalties for especially egregious abuses, requests for strategic weapons, etc.

## The Command

Real-world leaders may command many more subordinates than *Muscle* and *The Cavalry* (below) suggest, as explained in *The Arithmetic of Rank* (**GURPS Social Engineering**, p. 14). However, those people are busy with their jobs and can't be summoned en masse by an AR. Still, in any situation where the Rank-holder is in their physical presence, leading them, all ARs for personal backup – whether this means shouting for guards or having a message sent – get an extra +5, above and beyond any +1 to +5 if the request is "appropriate." Moreover, if he lacks a necessary command skill (typically one of Administration, Leadership, or Strategy), he can attempt the AR under *Specialists* (above) to have aides deal with the matter.

## Muscle

"Persuasive gentlemen," with a headcount equal to at most half the equivalent Patron value, arrive *quietly* in 1d+10 minutes – or in 1d hours, away from home base. They have a few relevant skills, particularly combat skills, at level 10-15 (1d+9), and light civilian weapons (daggers, cudgels, handguns, etc.). These are not the petitioner's subordinates (see *The Command*, above), but off-duty soldiers or cops (Military or Police Rank), local tough guys (Organized Crime Rank), etc. coming to help out of friendship or *esprit de corps*.

## The Cavalry

Similar to *Muscle* (above), but now the arrivals come loaded for bear and barge onto the scene noisily. Headcount is still half the equivalent Patron value – the local sheriff's department (10 points) might have a five-man SWAT team, while a modern army (20 to 25 points) would send a 10- to 12-man squad. These reinforcements are on duty, making appropriateness a concern.

*Modifiers:* -5 or worse if the request is "just because," and essentially inappropriate, but +1 to +5 if the leadership sent the hero into a dangerous situation and he deserves backup.

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*The trouble is, when you say to a general “You and whose army?”, he just has to point out of the window.*  
– Major Clogston, in **Monstrous Regiment**

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