Character Creation the MSH Way

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If you have played around at all with the system I wrote for converting characters from TSR's old *Marvel Super Heroes* game to *Paragon*, you will have quickly noticed that the two games use very different scales of power, especially when it comes to ability scores. *MSH* characters tend to be a bit "over the top", whereas *Paragon* characters are designed to be more realistic – or as realistic as one can get in a comic world. The end result is that, while it is easy enough to convert characters, using most (though not all) *MSH* characters in a regular *Paragon* campaign is likely to cause serious balance problems. You pretty much have to only pit *MSH* characters against other *MSH* characters. Of course, that seems to pretty much put the kibosh on creating your own characters.

That's where this article comes to the rescue. By replacing *Paragon*'s usual character creation rules with the following, you can create characters that are fit to stand up against your *MSH* conversions, in a higher-powered campaign. A few words of warning, first, though:

1. Character's created using this system will *not* be balanced with those created using the normal *Paragon* rules. In fact, they may not even be very well balanced when compared to each other, since *MSH* was not exactly renowned for its internal balance. Don't try to mix the two systems. Or, if you do, don't complain to me about the results.

2. This system is *not* "official", except in the sense that it was written by the same author who wrote the *Paragon* rules. It will never appear in any "official" release of *Paragon*, and characters made using it will *not* be considered for publication in *Vancouver: 2020*. It is just presented for fun, for those people who want to run a campaign using *MSH* characters or simply a generic high-powered campaign (it can be used either way).

With that out of the way, here's the system.

Step One: Race

Choose your Race, as usual: Alien, Altered Human, Augmented Human, Cyborg, or Mutant. If you want to go the random route, use the following chart:

> 01 – 10: Alien
> 11 – 35: Altered Human
> 36 – 55: Augmented Human
> 56 – 75: Cyborg
> 76 – 00: Mutant

As in normal *Paragon*, Altered Humans are treated as Mutants in almost every respect (i.e. whenever not noted otherwise in these rules). The distinction is made here to keep in step with *MSH* and to allow for a couple of other minor changes.

You will note the absence of normal Humans. *MSH* doesn't really encourage you to play normal Humans, because, frankly, there is no sensible way to balance them against the other races at this level of power. Augmented Humans effectively take their place and, to a degree, also stand in for the Hi-Tech origin in *MSH*.

Ignore the *Paragon* information regarding each race's strengths and weaknesses, except for the following, which *do* still apply: Base Speed, Skill Points, Automatic Language, Favored Class, and (for Aliens only) Variable Size. There is one minor change in this information: the Favored Class for Augmented Humans is now Gadgeteer, for those who have high-tech foci. Those who use magic foci can choose either Sorcerer or Warrior (whichever seems more appropriate).

Step Two: Ability Scores

Roll percentage dice six times and then assign the results to your abilities in any way you wish. Once you have done that, find the actual value of each score, using the chart below, by cross-indexing your roll (under the appropriate race heading) with the ability in question. In each case, add 1d3 to the base number, to add a bit of variability, e.g. if the indicated number is 8, then your final score will be 9-11 (8+1d3).

Depending on your race, you may receive a one-step shift down or up. This simply means that, instead of using the line that applies to your percentage roll, you use the previous or the following line (thus, the possible "0" and "101" results on the chart). If a negative shift is noted as "optional", you can take it or not, at your discretion. If you *do* take it, you get one extra Power "slot" in Step Three.

>   *Alien:* -1 shift for Charisma.
>   *Altered Human:* +1 shift for any single ability you wish. Optional -1 shift for Charisma.
>   *Augmented Human:* +1 shift for Intelligence if high-tech or Wisdom if magic-based.
>   *Cyborg:* +1 shift for Strength. -1 shift for Charisma.
>   *Mutant:* +1 shift for Constitution. Optional -1 shift for Charisma.

Example: I roll 23, 54, 79, 12, 98, and 65 for a Mutant character and decide to assign them as follows: Str 54, Dex 98, Con 79, Int 23, Wis 12, Cha 65. Consulting the chart, below, I turn these into the following values: Str 17, Dex 24, Con 21, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 14. Note that, because the character is a Mutant, he receives a +1 shift for Constitution. Thus, I find his score on the 81 – 96 line, rather than the 61 – 80 line. Also, I decide to take the optional Charisma penalty to get the extra Power "slot", so that value is found on the 41 – 60 line, rather than the 61 – 80 line. After adding 1d3 to each number, I end up with the following *final* scores: Str 19, Dex 25, Con 24, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Alien	Alt. Human or Mutant	Augmented Human	Cyborg	Str	Dex	Con, Int, or Wis	Cha
0	0	0	0	0*	0*	0*	0*
01 – 10	01 – 05	01 – 05	01 – 03	2	2	2	2
11 – 20	06 – 10	06 – 10	04 – 08	5	5	5	5
21 – 30	11 – 20	11 – 40	09 – 18	8	8	8	8
31 – 40	21 – 40	41 – 80	19 – 35	12	11	11	11
41 – 60	41 – 60	81 – 95	36 – 55	17	14	14	14
61 – 70	61 – 80	96 – 100	56 – 80	22	18	18	18
71 – 80	81 – 95	101	81 – 99	37	21	21	22
81 – 95	96 – 100	-	100	50	24	25	27
96 – 100	101	-	101	56*	29	31	33
101	-	-	-	58*	34	37	39

* - Add only 1d2, instead of 1d3.

Note that you do not have to use any Powers to get these scores – you simply get them for free. In fact, the Meta-Ability Powers is not even used directly in this version. There is one important exception: if your final Strength score is 23 or higher, you are assumed to have the Brawn Power, with a level based on your score: 23-37 Standard, 38-50 Improved, 51+ Ultra. This does *not* count against your Power "slot" limit (as described below); however, it *does* mean that you must abide by the usual Brawn melee restriction, i.e. using the *lowest* of your Strength and Dexterity modifiers for melee attack rolls. It also gives you access to Brawn Amplifiers (which *do* count against your Power "slots").

Step Three: Powers

Roll percentage dice to determine the number of Powers that your character has: 01-20 = 2, 21-60 = 3, 61-90 =4, 91-00 = 5. Mutants get one extra Power, beyond what the dice roll would indicate; Aliens get one less but have a minimum of 2. You can pick each Power or roll on the chart below. Remember that Brawn cannot be chosen in this version, although a character with a high enough Strength counts as having it for free and has access to its Amplifiers (see above). Similarly, the Meta-Ability Power is not used in this version, but you can take the Extra Talent Amplifier to gain some of the Ultra level gimmicks if your score in the appropriate ability is 24 or more.

Dice Roll	Power	Dice Roll	Power	Dice Roll	Power	Dice Roll	Power
01	Absorption	25-26	Empathy	56	Light	79-80	Psychic Attack
02	Animal Affinity	27-31	Energy Blast	57	Mental Illusion	81	Reflection
03-04	Aquatic Adaptation	32-33	Entangle	58-61	Meta-Senses	82-84	Regeneration
05	Astral Projection	34	Extra Limbs	62	Mind Control	85	Shapeshifting
06	Boost	35-36	Flash	63	Mirage	86	Shrinking
07	Chameleon	37-42	Flight	64	Morphing	87	Silence
08	Clairsentience	43-44	Force Field	65	Mutation	88	Skill Mimicry
09-10	Contagion	45	Growth	66-69	Natural Armor	89	Suppression
11-15	Damage Reduction	46	Healing	70-72	Natural Weaponry	90-91	Telekinesis
16-17	Damage Resistance	47-48	Hyperspeed	73	Nullification	92-94	Telepathy
18	Darkness	49	Imitation	74	Paralysis	95	Teleportation
19	Drain	50	Invisibility	75	Phasing	96	Transfer
20	Duplication	51	Invulnerability	76	Power Mimicry	97	Tunneling
21-23	Element Control	52-53	Leaping	77	Power Resistance	98	Universal Translator
24	Elongation	54-55	Life Support	78	Probability Control	99-00	Wall-Crawling

For each Power, roll percentage dice to determine its initial level: 01-50 = Standard, 51-98 = Improved, 99-00 = Ultra. A Power's level may be modified in several ways but never increased past Ultra.

- If the character is an Altered Human or Mutant, and you took the optional Charisma reduction (see Step Two), you can improve a single Power's level by one *or* take an Amplifier for it.

- You can improve a Power's level by one *or* take an Amplifier for it by taking a Weakness, as described in Step Four. Remember that you can do this no more than twice.

- You can choose to give up a Power to increase the level of another Power by one or to gain a Power Amplifier.

- You can apply a Reducer to a Power to improve its level or gain an Amplifier for it, as usual.

- An Augmented Human *must* apply the *External* Reducer to *all* of his Powers, since they must be in his focus or foci; however, he gains the usual benefits for doing so (i.e. level increases or Amplifiers). If this would push the level of a Power past Ultra, then he can take an Amplifier, instead, as usual, or he can put another (new) Power in the same focus. This new Power automatically has a level of Standard and gains no benefit for the *External* Reducer, although it can be increased in other ways, as usual.

Step Four: Weaknesses

As in normal *Paragon*, you can give your character Weaknesses. For each Weakness you take, you can add an Amplifier to one of your Powers or increase its level by one (up to a maximum of Ultra). In other words, you gain one Power "slot", which can only be used to improve an existing Power in some manner. As usual, you are not restricted in the number of Weaknesses you can take – only in the number that will give you the Power bonus (a maximum of two). Remember, as well, that Weaknesses used to boost your Wealth do *not* count toward this limit, nor does the optional Altered Human or Mutant Charisma reduction.

Step Five: Class

You can now choose your class, as usual. If you want to determine it randomly, roll percentage dice: 01-12 = Expert, 13-24 = Gadgeteer, 25-36 = Martial Artist, 37-50 = Metahuman, 51-62 = Rogue, 63-68 = Sorcerer, 69-80 = Warrior, 81-00 = Favored Class. This roll can also be used to determine your Favored Class, for Aliens (of course, you must re-roll results of 81-00 when doing this).

Step Six: Wealth

Roll percentage dice to find your Wealth Level: 01-05 = Poor, 06-25 = Lean, 26-75 = Average, 76-95 = Comfortable, 96-00 = Well Off. If the character is an Alien or Mutant, reduce the result by one level. If he is an Augmented Human, increase it by one level. Altered Humans and Cyborgs just keep the rolled result. As usual, you can increase your Wealth by two levels if you take a Weakness. Alternatively, as long as your Wealth level is Lean or better, you can decrease it by three levels (to a minimum of Dead Broke) and take *Poverty* as a Weakness.

Step Seven: Everything Else

You can figure out your skills, feats, hit points, starting money, and so forth, using the normal *Paragon* rules. Some things to keep in mind:

- Your Energy score is calculated as usual: 12 + Con modifier + Wis modifier + 1 for each level after the 1st. Altered Humans and Mutants get a +2 bonus (*not* +4).

- All characters except Augmented Humans start out with a single feat at 1st level; Augmented Humans get two.

- Remember that your skill ranks at first level are based on those you get from your race *and* those you would normally get for one level in your class. For example, a Mutant Rogue with an Intelligence of 13 would start with 24 ranks – (4+1) x 3 for being a Mutant, plus 8+1 for being a Rogue. Since normal Humans are not used in this version, no one gets a +1 race bonus for skills. For your convenience, the races and classes are listed below with their initial skill ranks:

  Alien: (6 + Int modifier) x 3   Expert: 8 + Int modifier
  Altered Human: (4 + Int modifier) x 3   Extra: 6 + Int modifier
  Augmented Human: (6 + Int modifier) x 3   Gadgeteer: 6 + Int modifier
  Cyborg: (6 + Int modifier) x 3   Martial Artist: 4 + Int modifier
  Mutant: (4 + Int modifier) x 3   Metahuman: 2 + Int modifier
                                              Rogue: 8 + Int modifier
                                              Sorcerer: 4 + Int modifier
                                              Warrior 2 + Int modifier