



# SOCIAL STATUS

***“The best way to rise in society is to use all possible means of persuading people that one has already risen in society.”***

Francois de La Rochefoucauld (1613 – 1680), French moralist and writer

## 1. Social Status Discussion

1. How important is social status in your culture? How important is status to you? How would you describe your status? How could you increase your social status?
2. What are the benefits of having a high social status? What are the disadvantages of having a low status?
3. What kind of things give people status in your culture? What are the status symbols? Can you tell someone's status just by looking at them? How? What would increase someone's social status? What would decrease someone's social status?
4. Which cars are considered high or low status? What shops/brands do high- and low-status people buy from? Where do high- and low-status people go for their holidays/vacations?
5. Which are the exclusive neighbourhoods in your city? Where do the low-status people live?
6. Does having someone to clean your house give you status in your culture? Why or why not?
7. If you saw an old man with a beautiful young wife, what would you think about his status?
8. Who decides what is considered high or low status?

## 2. Social Status Vocabulary

- **to lose face** (verb phrase), **face** (noun) – *to be humiliated or to lose respect or honour; face represents a person's honour or public image.*
- **to look down one's nose at someone / to look down on someone** (verb, idiom) – *to view another person as inferior.*
- **snob** (noun) – *a person who believes they are superior to others with respect to their social status; someone who looks down on others.*
- **stuck-up** (adjective) – *describes a person who thinks they are superior to others; describes a snob or someone who looks down on others.*
- **inverted snobbery** (noun) – *an attitude that considers anything from higher social classes, wealth or social status as bad.*
- **nouveau riche / new money** (noun, derogatory) – *a person whose wealth was acquired within their own generation, as opposed to 'old money', which was acquired through a succession of inheritance back through the generations.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. Affluent people in West London whose families have lived in the area for generations have little time for the **nouveau riche / new money** that recently moved into the area from other countries.
2. Everyone makes fun of the girl in my class because she doesn't speak with a regional accent. It's just **inverted snobbery**.
3. I don't like him. He's too **stuck-up** for my liking. We all wanted to go to the pub after work, but he made us go to this really expensive restaurant just because they sold 'real beer'.
4. She's always **looking down her nose** at me. She thinks she's so much better than everyone else just because she pronounces 'chorizo' like they do in Spain.
5. She's such a **snob**. She won't use the bus because she says she doesn't want to be next to all the poor people.
6. When the Russian president made a joke at his expense, the American president **lost face** in front of the entire world.

### Social Status vocabulary comprehension questions

1. What would cause someone to lose face in your culture?
2. Which people look down their nose at you?
3. Do you know any snobs? What makes them a snob?
4. Would you describe yourself as stuck-up in any way?
5. Does inverted snobbery exist in your country?
6. Does your country have nouveau riche people? What do people think about them? How did they make their money?

### 3. Video: Social Anxiety

You are going to watch a video by The School of Life called "Status Anxiety." The speech in the video is quite fast, so it might be an idea to reduce the speed to 75%.

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-social-status/>

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

#### Multiple choice

1. If you give an impressive answer to the question "what do you do?" at a party, how are people likely to react?  
a) they will ignore you    b) they will be envious    **c) they will want to know more about you**
2. What is the opposite of a snob?  
**a) your mum**    b) your friend    c) your partner
3. It is said we live in which times?  
a) rewarding    **b) materialistic**    c) emotional
4. What do people who go after money, big jobs or fancy cars want?  
**a) to be noticed**    b) to be in a relationship    c) to experience success

#### Sentence completion

5. From our earliest days, we are told that we can become **anything**.
6. In a meritocracy, the **rewards** go to those who are cleverest or work the hardest.
7. In the olden days, the **poor** were referred to as 'unfortunates'.
8. Especially in the **United States**, the poor are known as 'losers'.

#### Short answer

9. Nobody will believe you if you say you were fired because of what? **Bad luck**
10. Suicide rates increase when a society joins what? **The (so-called) modern world**
11. Many of the ways to succeed have nothing to do with what? **Status**
12. So many vital sides of us will never appear on what? **Our business cards**

## 4. Social Status Conversation Questions

1. Do you generally associate with people with the same social status as you, or do you mix?
2. How important is going to university for someone's social status? Is the particular university important? Does it give someone more status if they went to a foreign university? Who were the cool kids at school? Who were the outcasts?
3. Which groups of people have the most status in your country? Which have the least? Who are the most respected people in your country? Who are the least respected? Why? Do you agree with this?
4. Which professions have the highest status in your country? Which have the lowest?
5. Do some nationalities have a higher status than others? If so, which ones? Which do you consider have a lower status?
6. Is there a link between social status and health? Is there a link between social status and mental health and self-esteem?
7. Is social status the same as social class? Why or why not?
8. Why do humans place so much importance on social status? Is it natural for humans to organise themselves in hierarchies? If so, why is this?

## 5. Social Status Writing Task

Write about your opinion of status. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- How important status is to you.
- What gives people status in your country.
- Why people are so obsessed with their status.

### **Alternative exam practice question:**

These days, people are more concerned about their status than they are about being a good person. Why are so many people so obsessed with their social status these days? What should they be more concerned about?