

## 'How many aura points did I lose?' The new coolness currency has hints of Aristotle

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

a. How well do you know Gen Alpha slang? Match the words to their definitions below.

- |         |                                      |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. rizz | a. style, especially for clothing    |
| 2. cap  | b. something excellent or impressive |
| 3. drip | c. charisma or charm                 |
| 4. fire | d. a lie or to lie or exaggerate     |

#### 2 Key words

a. Choose the correct word to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

- a feeling or quality that surrounds a person or place and is noticeable  
a. character                      b. karma                      c. aura
- the powerful quality some people have to attract, impress or influence other people  
a. charisma                      b. ethics                      c. trend
- a general change in a situation or how people are behaving; a new development in clothing, make-up etc  
a. superficial                      b. trend                      c. charisma
- someone who creates content, such as videos, writing and images, for the internet or another platform for the public to view  
a. honour code                      b. content creator                      c. character
- the study of the movements and positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars in the belief that they affect people's lives and character  
a. aura                      b. karma                      c. astrology
- the force produced by a person's actions in one life that influences what happens to them  
a. karma                      b. ethics                      c. aura
- a system in which people are trusted to behave well and obey rules  
a. honour code                      b. karma                      c. ethics

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8. moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour
  - a. character
  - b. ethics
  - c. superficial
9. all the qualities and features that make a person different from others
  - a. ethics
  - b. anxiety
  - c. character
10. not studying or looking at something carefully or completely; seeing only what is obvious
  - a. failure
  - b. superficial
  - c. honour code
11. feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen
  - a. anxiety
  - b. charisma
  - c. superficial
12. lack of success in doing or achieving something; not succeeding
  - a. character
  - b. anxiety
  - c. failure

**b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ want their work to be very popular, so they become more popular and make more money.
2. Aries, Virgo and Sagittarius are three sun signs in Western \_\_\_\_\_.
3. My friend went to a special photographer to get a picture of her \_\_\_\_\_. It shows her energy as colours.
4. Many people suffer from mental-health issues like depression and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. You don't have to accept \_\_\_\_\_. Learn from it and work hard until you succeed.
6. Don't be so \_\_\_\_\_! It's what's inside that counts.
7. Many universities have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ or pledge that students follow for academic honesty.
8. Which presidential candidate do you think has the most \_\_\_\_\_?

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**Alaina Demopoulos**

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- 1 You can count calories, steps, streams of your favourite song – and now, you can count how cool you are with aura points, a way to calculate your rizz. (That's what the kids call 'charisma'. If you didn't know that, you just lost 100 aura points.)
- 2 Ask someone out and get a yes? That's 100 aura points for you. Still on Snapchat past the age of 19? Subtract 1,000 aura points. Answered a question in class, but got it wrong? You're in the red now.
- 3 Or so the TikToks that explain the idea go. According to the *Wall Street Journal's* report on the trend, the hashtag #aurapoints jumped 378 per cent from May to June. "When you have a really, really, really good aura, I feel like that really translates from online to the other side of the phone," Hina Sabatine, a 27-year-old Los Angeles content creator said.
- 4 On TikTok, young people share instances in which they earned, or lost, points. For example, you'll get points for moving on quickly from a break-up and not sharing too many details. But stay with a cheater, and that's minus 100 points – anyone who has aura would never put up with that.
- 5 It's not a very serious system. Still, some creators use it to help describe moments of growth. One woman said she gained aura points at her boyfriend's funeral when she gave his ex time and space to say goodbye.
- 6 A recent graduate said that she cried when her father, whom she had not seen or spoken to in five years, showed up to her ceremony to say that he loved her. "How many aura points did I lose?" she asked, sparking a discussion on absent fathers in the comment section.
- 7 For Julian Baggini, a philosopher and co-founder of the *Philosophers' Magazine* (and *Guardian* contributor), explained that aura points fall in line with Gen Z's reported love of astrology, karma and energy right now. He said it "seems to be a sort of weird contemporary honour code."
- 8 Aura points might seem new, but some philosophers say elements of the trend come from ancient history. "This is in line with what's known as virtue ethics, which came from Aristotle and is popular in Greek and Roman philosophy," said Ellie Anderson, an assistant professor of philosophy at Pomona College and co-host of the *Overthink* podcast. This theory emphasises the quality of a person's character, rather than how well they follow rules or a higher power.
- 9 "This trend is about people thinking about whether or not their everyday life is matching up to an idea," Anderson said. "It encourages us to speak with others about what we're doing in life, and whether or not it's good. Even though aura points track a cool factor, it doesn't seem like it's doing that in a purely superficial sense."
- 10 Paul Blaschko, an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, compares aura points to moral credit, or the idea that every "good" action or decision a person makes can potentially make up for future "bad" ones.
- 11 The philosopher Alain de Botton described "status anxiety" as "anxiety about what others think of us; about whether we're judged a success or a failure". Blaschko sees this in aura points. He said, "Users are inviting others to critique them but also being a part of that transaction of status through posting their opinions."
- 12 Understanding the philosophy behind a simple TikTok trend? That's 1,000 aura points for you.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What is the new way to calculate your charisma?
2. What percentage did hashtag #aurapoints jump from May to June?
3. What is an example from the article of a way to gain aura points?
4. What is an example from the article of a way to lose aura points?
5. According to Baggini, what does this trend "fall in line" with?
6. Which ancient philosopher does Assistant Professor Anderson mention?
7. What does that theory emphasise?
8. What does Professor Blaschko compare aura points to?
9. What is "status anxiety" as described by Alain de Botton?
10. What part of "status anxiety" does Professor Blaschko see in aura points?

#### 4 Key language

a. Match each verb to the noun that collocates with it.

- |                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. You can <b>count</b> ...  | a. blame.         |
| 2. You can <b>share</b> ...  | b. points.        |
| 3. You can <b>place</b> ...  | c. details.       |
| 4. You can <b>invite</b> ... | d. participation. |

b. Choose two of the verbs above. Write a sentence for each one. Use any collocation you wish.

#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do." – Potter Stewart
- Part of an honour code is telling the truth even when it's difficult.
- "Instant karma's gonna get you." – John Lennon

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#### 6 In your own words

a. Do some research about a current trend on social media. Answer these questions.

- What is the hashtag?
- What is the trend about?
- How would you describe this trend?
- What is a trend you wish would gain/lose popularity?

b. Report your findings to the class and share the facts you learned, as well as your opinions. Here are some phrases to help you show emphasis during your report.

- especially
- particularly
- most importantly
- above all