

Shortly after Riot Games announced the new Honor system for League of Legends, and without much detail, I speculated on the potential value, audience, and even the way things might work. Now that it's out for all, I jumped back into League of Legends just to see things for myself and see just how Honor was working.

First, some background. Honor is intended as a way to reward fellow players for being good sports during matchmade games. The system is broken down into several categories, which are: Helpful, Humble, Teamwork, and Friendly. So, once you've played a match with your team, an option will be there at the end for click and award points to others. This system is not the first of its kind in a MOBA, but it does seem to be the best organized. And that's not really a coincidence.

DOTA 2 has a commendation system intended to be used to similar effect, except that there are fewer restrictions on it. This system was also in place first, and has garnered its share of criticism on several fronts. Critics of the system look to the ability to award commendations to players you haven't been matched with. This has led to incidences of commendation trading. People in outside communities or even right in the DOTA 2 chat will deal with each other to vote each other up. This does undermine the very intent of the system, and while not rendering it completely worthless, puts a real dent in the credibility of the numbers you see on each players' profile.

It was not thus, that farfetched to worry about the potential for abuse when a similar system was announced for the world's most popular MOBA. But it seems that Riot has gotten off to a good start and learned from Valve in the execution of Honor. Someone has to be first, however sometimes someone else is best. The ground rules that Riot has set for Honor look toward that potential.

First off, players can only assign a limited amount of Honor at any given time. This can actually run out, so you'll have to manage it carefully and can't just award points to people willy-nilly. If you run dry, you'll have to play more games. And for assigning Honor, not all games count. You can't award points in any of the categories to those in Custom games. This isn't intended as a way to reward your friends, but to reward strangers in the community as a whole that you find to be good sports and those going the extra mile and beyond. They're also not treating the system like a currency, though Riot states that they're looking at potential bonuses for being known as honorable at some future time. And the most Honor will always come from players you've been matched with. All of the points you've been awarded will display on your profile, so it's supposed to be very public.

And Riot has stated that they're carefully monitoring the potential for Honor trading. From the FAQ: "You can only distribute Honor following a matchmade game, so it will not be possible to set up games specifically to trade Honor. We also have a lot of math in place to track down players who might be trading Honor. Those who abuse the system may find themselves subject to disciplinary action." This is all very encouraging. And if you're a player that has felt the sting of punishment via the Tribunal? Your Honor will be reset back down to zero and you'll have to earn it all over again.

So, how are things working in the actual game? I jumped in to see if I could earn my first Honor points and sure enough, I did. That's a good sign, as it shows people are putting the new system to use. I chose Soraka, and spent much of the match keeping my teammates alive and energized, a role that I admit might predispose me to points, but I wasn't fishing. Sometimes support is a thankless role. But

my whole purpose there was that I was curious to see if and how people were using the system in its first several days. Though the real test will be once the novelty wears off. I wonder if people will stop caring about awarding the good players and just ignore that option or if Honor will be integral and appreciated. Time will tell, but the new system is extremely well-implemented so far that I'm personally encouraged. As I said before, it won't be the worst of the worst who this system will help, but those sandwiched between. The everyday decent player who may not always speak up, but is there when it counts.