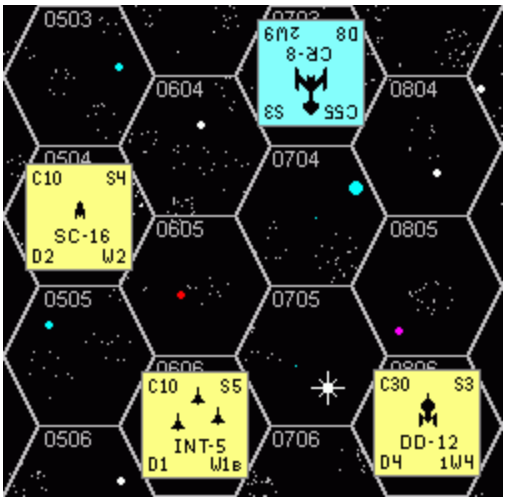
EasyStar - Rules for a Simple Space Wargame

Last revision: 10/04/2004



I. Introduction

Game Scenario: there are two space empires that don't like each other, and their starships fight whenever they meet. Okay, so it's not very profound; whaddya want from a free game?

EasyStar is a 2-to-4-player tactical starship combat game that allows you great flexibility in designing your spaceships, without having to print out or erase worksheets for your ships every time you play. It does this with a system of track charts and counters. All you need to provide is one or two six-sided dice. The emphasis is on fast play and blowing things up, not on long, drawn-out slugfests. I created this game because I wanted unlimited variety in ship design and tactics, without getting bogged down in range measurements, turning angles, power factors, or checking off gazillions of ship-damage boxes. Game features include:

- Reusable track sheets for ship design and keeping score
- Up to 18 ships for each player
- Five different sizes of starship, from very small to excessively big
- Speed and weapons capacity for each ship type can be altered
- All weapons can be custom-fitted for range and power
- Beams, missiles, torpedoes, and point-defense weapons
- Auxiliary devices including ECM, enhanced targeting, and deflector shields
- Carriers with two kinds of fighters

- Special advantages for each player's flagship
- Movement rules including simplified inertia & momentum
- Quick combat resolution - usually 1 die roll per weapon
- Critical hits
- Ramming attacks and accidental collisions
- Optional rules for three-player and four-player games and campaign games

These rules are also suitable for playing with miniatures on a hex-based map.

II. Starting the Game

Begin by agreeing on the size of the game. This is determined by number of build points. These are given in multiples of 250, and are needed to buy both ships and weapons. There is no maximum number of build points. The only limit is that the game's track sheets and ship-counter numbers can handle up to 18 ships. The minimum-sized game (250 build points, usually spent on 5 ships) takes about 20-30 minutes to set up, and 30-40 minutes to play (slightly less once you're familiar with the game).

Put a slider on Turn 1 of the turn chart. Each player places three sliders in the appropriate rows of the scoring chart.

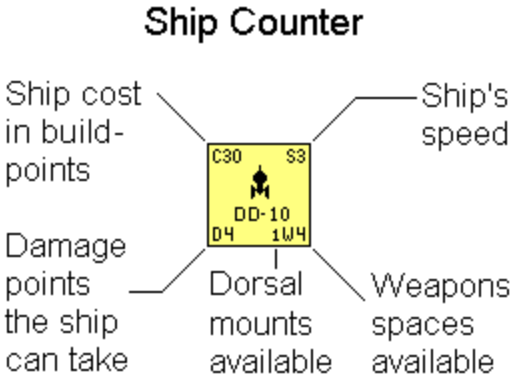
III. Map Size

The map that comes with this game is one of my M8 map tiles, and fits on a standard letter-sized or A4-sized sheet of paper. Four maps in a 2x2 pattern will result in a quick, destructive game in which speed and maneuvering make little difference. For a more free-wheeling game, and for any game with ten ships or more on a side, use nine map tiles in a 3x3 pattern. Feel free to experiment with bigger map sheets, or use larger hex maps from other sources. The more room your ships have to maneuver, the more interesting the game will be.

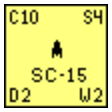
IV. Ship Types

To create a ship, first choose a ship type. The game includes 5 types of starship, classed as Scout, Destroyer, Cruiser, Battleship, and Leviathan. Each ship has a purchase cost in build points. Larger ships cost more, but can take more damage and carry more weapons. Be careful that you don't take so many ships that you can't afford to buy weapons for them! A good guideline is to spend about half your build points on ships (a bit more if your game is small, a bit less if you're using big ships); this leaves enough to arm them well.

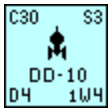
Here is a typical ship counter:



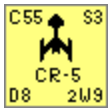
The basic ship types are quickly described below, and in detail in the Ship Table.



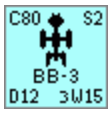
(1) *Scouts* are flimsy and can normally carry only one weapon. But they're very fast and maneuverable. Built and used cleverly, they can play a useful role in the fleet.



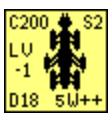
(2) *Destroyers* are good as escorts for bigger ships, but they can do a lot of damage on their own. There are surprisingly many ways to arm them; see Appendix A for examples.



(3) *Cruisers* can carry a good armament (typically two to three decent weapons and an auxiliary) and can take a lot more punishment than a destroyer.



(4) *Battleships* are the slow-moving, heavyweight sluggers of the fleet. There's no real limit on how nasty their many weapons can be, and they usually have room for a bunch of auxiliary devices as well.



(5) The *Leviathan* is for the player who just has to have the biggest honkin' ship in the galaxy, no matter what it costs. The game gives each player only one Leviathan counter, and that should be enough, because you can easily spend 500 build points or more on the ship and its weapons. Players should agree in advance if Leviathans will be allowed in a game. See section VI-D for special Leviathan rules.

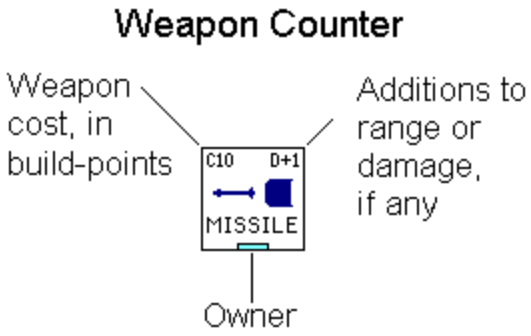
Note the number of each ship type, 1 through 5. This number is important for several matters, including the cost of adding gun mounts and the chances of repairing navigation damage.

V. Weapons

Once you've chosen your ships, you must arm them. Each of your ships has room for a certain amount of weapons, as determined by the "W" number in the lower-right corner of the ship counter. Your goal is to buy the weapons you can afford, that will fit on your ships, and that will support your fighting style. Mastering this triple balancing act is a key to success in this game.

Weapons are defined by weapon counters, range counters, and damage counters. Each player gets an identical set of weapon counters. If you run out of a particular weapon, you'll have to use something else. Players cannot swap weapon counters.

Here is a typical weapon counter:



Range/damage counters have the digits 2 to 5 on them; the number that's facing up shows the value of the counter. The same counters serve for both range and damage. The player counter sheets have enough range/damage counters for a 750-point game; if you need more, print the optional sheet of them. See Section VI, "Ship Design Sheets," for more information.

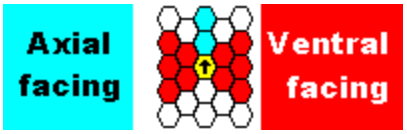
A. Ranges & Damages

Every weapon must have a range and a damage setting. An unmodified weapon has 1 range unit and 1 damage unit, and takes up one weapons space on the ship. If you want it to shoot farther or hurt the enemy more, you can buy range and/or damage units for that weapon. Each unit of range or damage costs 5 build points. Also, each additional unit of damage takes up one weapons space on the spaceship, and each *even-numbered* unit of range uses up one weapons space. Thus, within the limits of the ship's size and your build points, you can emphasize long range, hitting power, or both.

B. Weapon Locations

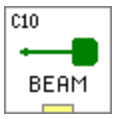
Your next decision is where on the ship to put your weapons. There are three types of locations on a spaceship: axial, ventral, and dorsal. The location determines how much space a weapon requires, and which hexes it can fire into.

- *Axial weapons* are built into the ship's hull facing forward. They take up the least space, and can have a range and damage of up to 5, which makes them potentially the most devastating devices in the game. Their only drawback is that they must fire straight ahead - you have to aim the ship to aim the weapon.
- *Ventral weapons* are mounted on transverse rails so they can fire to either side of the ship (but not to both sides in the same turn). They take up one more weapons space than an axial mount, and are limited to a maximum of 4 in range and damage. But they can cover wide arcs on the ship's sides without forcing the ship to maneuver.
- *Dorsal weapons* are mounted in rotating turrets which can fire in any direction. They take up no more space than an axial weapon. The drawbacks to dorsal weapons are that (a) most ships are limited in how many they can carry, and (b) they cannot exceed 3 in range and damage.



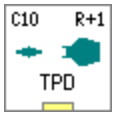
C. Weapon Types

The four basic weapon types are described quickly below, and in detail in the Weapons Table.

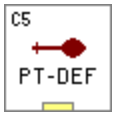


Beam turrets are energy-projection weapons. They don't do as much damage as missiles, but they can't be shot down; they can't fire as far as torpedoes, but they're more accurate; and they can shoot at fighters, which neither of the other two can do.

Missile pods do one more point of damage than a beam or torpedo weapon of the same size, and this extra point isn't included when figuring the maximum damage of the various kinds of mounts. Thus, an unimproved missile does 2 points of damage, and a maxed-out axial-mounted missile could hit for (ouch!) 6 points. The trouble with missiles is that they can be shot down by point-defense turrets before they hit their target.

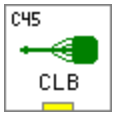


Torpedo bays can shoot one hex farther than other weapon types of similar size, up to a maximum of six hexes for an axial mount. Treat the extra unit of range in the same way as a missile's extra point of damage when designing your ships. The drawback to a torpedo is that it is less accurate than beams or missiles.

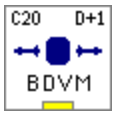


Point-defense turrets are short-range beam weapons that can shoot down incoming missiles and nearby fighters, but not ships. You cannot buy additional range or damage for a point-defense turret.

There are three powerful special weapons that save small amounts of cost or space. Only cruisers and larger ships can use them.



The *Centerline Blaster* (CLB) can only be mounted as an Axial weapon. It works just like an axial beam with range and damage of 5, but costs 5 build points less and requires 6 weapons spaces instead of 7.



The *Bi-directional Ventral Missile* (BDVM) costs as much as two normal missiles and uses 4 weapons spaces (this includes the extra space needed for a ventral mount). But it can fire twice in a turn, once to each side (not twice to the same side). Adding range and damage costs the same as for a normal missile. It can only be mounted as a Ventral weapon.

The *Torpedo Bank* is a triple torpedo bay that must be Ventrally mounted. It costs the same as three normal torpedoes, but takes up only four weapon spaces instead of six. All three torpedoes must be fired at the same target. You cannot add range or damage to it.

D. Auxiliary Devices

Auxiliaries are considered weapons for ship-design purposes, but they aren't really weapons; rather, they enhance your ship's fighting ability. Auxiliary devices don't have a facing - they work in all directions. A ship cannot mount more than one of each kind of auxiliary device, except fighter bays. You can put auxiliaries in "Aux" spaces or unused weapons spaces on the ship-design sheet. Each device uses up one of the weapons spaces allotted to the ship.

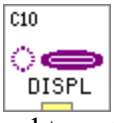
Frontal armor helps protect a ship from damage. A ship with frontal armor subtracts one point of damage from every hit it receives on its front - that is, through the hex-side the ship is facing. If the hit comes in from an angle on the front, but is not in the ventral arcs, consider it a frontal hit. If a one-point-damage weapon scores a critical hit, but the armor absorbs the one point of damage, the critical hit is also negated. This armor also protects against damage from collisions. Frontal armor cannot be knocked out by a critical hit.

ECM pod makes your ship harder to hit. When firing at a ship that carries an ECM pod, the attacker must subtract 1 from his die rolls. An ECM pod affects every weapon fired at it, no matter how many times its ship is attacked in a turn.

Targeting pod improves your ship's marksmanship. A ship equipped with a Targeting pod adds 1 to its die roll every time it uses one of its weapons. If a ship with a Targeting pod attacks a ship with an ECM pod, the two pods cancel each other out.

Jump engine allows a special move. Once per turn, a ship with a jump engine may move five hexes straight ahead in the direction it is currently facing, with no chance of collisions in the first four hexes. The destination hex, however, must be empty. The ship must use its jump engine at the start of its move, before using any movement points; it must move exactly five hexes straight ahead; and it cannot move, change facings (unless with a maneuvering pod), or change its current speed in the same turn as the jump. Jumps off the map are not allowed.

Maneuvering pod lets a ship change facings by 1 hex-side each turn, in addition to its normal turning allowance, regardless of its speed. The ship can use the extra turning at any point during its move, even at the end. If a ship with a maneuvering pod suffers a navigation critical hit, it can still turn one hex-side each turn. Using a maneuvering pod in the same turn as a jump engine is allowed, if you turn before or after the jump (not in the middle).



Displacer pod causes a ship to blink into hyperspace for a moment, hopefully at the instant a weapon is about to hit it. When a ship equipped with a displacer pod is hit by a weapon, the defender can roll one die. If the defender's roll is greater or equal to the attacker's unmodified to-hit roll (ignore ECM and targeting pods for this purpose), then the displacement was well-timed; the weapon flashed through the space where the ship used to be, and missed. If the roll is lower than the attacker's roll, then the timing was bad and the weapon scored its hit. A displacer pod can be used against only one attack per turn, whether successful or not. This device can also negate a collision; see the section on Collisions.

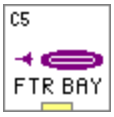
Power-up pod gives any one weapon a +1 on range or damage for the current turn. You must announce which weapon is getting the power-up before rolling the attack die for that weapon, and whether the power-up will be for range or damage. If you give range to a point-defense turret, the turret can shoot

down fighters at a range of 2; if you give it damage, you can treat it as a beam weapon with a range and damage of 1 against other ships. The power-up can exceed the normal limits for weapons (such as temporarily giving a dorsal beam a range of 4), but if you do so, and the unmodified attack roll is a 1, the weapon overloads and is destroyed.

Deflector shields protect your ship from damage. If a ship equipped with a shield is hit by any weapon, reduce the damage taken by 1 per hit. Thus, a 1-point weapon hit will do no damage at all, and a 3-point hit only does 2 points' damage. If a one-point-damage weapon scores a critical hit, but the deflector shield absorbs the one point of damage, the critical hit is also negated. Deflector shields work against an unlimited number of attacks per turn, but not against collisions. The effects of frontal armor and deflector shields are cumulative; if a ship has both, and is hit on its front, two points of damage are negated.

Engine adds one to your ship's speed. No ship can have a speed greater than 4, so scouts can't use them; nor can ships that have given up speed for weapons. An engine does not use up a weapons space. Engines cannot be knocked out by critical hits that destroy weapons.

Gun mount adds weapons spaces and damage resistance to a ship. The cost and the added capacity vary with the size of the ship -- 5 points and 1 weapon for a scout, 10 points and 2 weapons for a destroyer, 15 points and 3 weapons for a cruiser, or 20 points and 4 weapons for a battleship. The gun mount itself does not use up any weapons spaces. Gun mounts cannot be knocked out by critical hits (but the weapons mounted on them can). A gun mount also adds 1 to the damage a ship can take before it is destroyed. Leviathans cannot use gun mounts.

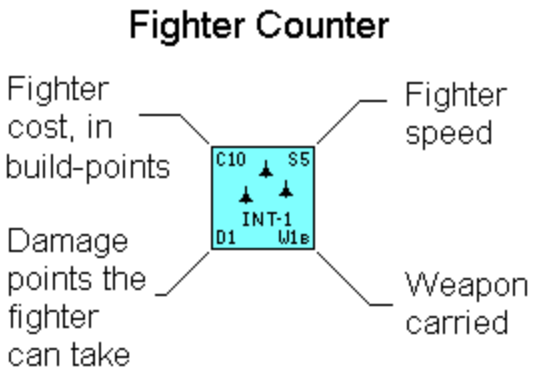


Fighter bays allow a ship to carry 2 fighters. The fighters must be purchased separately. Unlike other auxiliaries, you can mount more than one fighter bay on a ship. Fighter bays can be knocked out by critical hits; if hit while full of fighters, the fighters are also destroyed.

Damage Control counters are not really auxiliary systems. Each player can buy up to 3 of them during the ship-design process, and use them at will on any of his/her ships during the movement phase. One Damage Control counter can repair two units of damage on the ship-damage slider, instantly repair a navigation hit, or recover one unit of lost speed. Two counters together can restore five units of damage; three counters can repair eight units. They can be used only to repair battle damage, not to improve a ship; nor can they bring back a destroyed ship. Once used, the Damage Control counters are discarded - they can only be used once. Because they aren't part of any ship, they cannot be hurt by critical hits.

E. Fighters

"Fighters" is a generic term for both interceptors and attack craft. You must place them on unused weapons spaces (even Range or Damage spaces) of the ship-design sheets for the ships that carry them. Even though you have to have room on the design sheet for them, they don't actually use up weapons spaces on their ship. They cannot be used unless they start the game aboard a carrier. ("Carrier" is a generic term for any ship with fighter bays.) They can't shoot if they are still aboard their carrier. They must be launched into an adjacent empty hex at some point in the game (which uses no movement points for either carrier or fighters), and are then moved and fought independently, even if their carrier is destroyed. When launched, they must have the same facing as the carrier that launched them. Fighter counters are similar to ship counters, except that instead of weapons spaces, the lower-right corner shows the actual weapon carried:



Interceptors carry an axial-mounted beam, and can attack ships or other fighters. An attack craft's weapon is an axial missile pod, which can only hit ships. Treat these weapons like any other unimproved weapon. You cannot buy additional weapons to mount on fighters.

If you want to bring a fighter back aboard, just move it next to a friendly carrier that is not filled with fighters, face it in the same direction as the carrier, and it's aboard; remove the fighter from the map and put it back on the carrier's design sheet.

F. Flagship Advantages

At some point during the ship-design process, each player chooses one ship to be his/her flagship. The player then rolls two dice and consults the Flagship Advantage Table. This will give one or more free weapons to the flagship. These weapons cost nothing in build points and take up no weapons spaces. You can mount them even if your flagship's design would normally forbid them (for example, putting a second dorsal-mount weapon on a flagship that has only one dorsal mounting position). The only limit on Advantages is that you can't use them if you have no room for them on the ship-design sheet.

If the Advantage offers you a choice of weapons, choose whichever one you prefer. If the Advantage is impossible because all weapon counters of that type are already in use, you may either redesign another ship to free up a counter, or forfeit the Advantage. You may redesign your flagship (or other ships) once the Advantage is known, but you cannot remove the Advantage weapon(s) or exchange them for something else.

VI. Ship Design Sheets

The ship design sheets are reusable track charts for defining your ship designs. Each design sheet holds data for five ships. The top row for each ship has slider tracks for ship speed and damage. The second row holds definitions for your weapons placements - one three-box Axial, one Ventral, one Dorsal, and another Ventral. The third row duplicates the second row, except it has just one Ventral and one block for auxiliary devices. Small ships don't have a third row; Scouts have only part of the first row.

A. Designing Ships

You can use the score-sheet sliders to keep track of the build points you've spent on ships and weapons, for games up to 1000 build-points (or 2000 if you use the Red and Green [players 3 & 4] scoring tracks). For bigger games, you'll need a pocket calculator, or pencils and scratch paper.

Each ship's maximum speed and damage are defined on its ship counter. Set the damage sliders to the correct numbers, and the speed sliders to 1. Each row of weapons spaces can hold one improved weapon (with range/damage counters) or 1-3 unimproved weapons or auxiliaries. If a weapon's range or damage remains at 1, you don't need a range or damage counter there. See the Weapons section for info on what the various locations and placements mean. You can see examples of designed ships in the Sample Destroyers section in Appendix A.

When buying missiles, use damage counters for the damage you've actually paid for, not the adjusted value with the +1 missile modifier included. Add the missile's extra point during combat. Treat torpedoes and their +1 range modifier in the same way. This way, if your enemy blows up one of your ships, he/she will only get victory points for what you actually bought and paid for.

During the design process, you need to keep track of several issues:

- How many build points you have left. Each weapon has a cost on its weapon counter, plus 5 points for each added range and/or damage unit. If your fleet includes carriers, remember to buy your fighters!
- How many weapons spaces are available on the ship; this is the "W" rating on the ship counter. Remember that each weapon or auxiliary uses one space, plus one for each added unit of damage, one for each even-numbered unit of range, and one extra unit for ventral mounts. Fighters do *not* count as weapons when adding up weapons spaces, even though you must place them in weapons spaces on the design sheet.
- Which way each weapon will face. This is especially important when deciding which weapons get the valuable dorsal mountings.

You can trade speed for weapons if you wish. For each unit of speed you give up, you gain weapons spaces based on the size of the ship (1 space for a scout, 2 for a destroyer, 3 for a cruiser, etc.). Place a "Speed -1" counter on the damage track each time you do this; leave it upside-down to remind you that you can't repair it with a Damage-Control counter. If you give up all speed units, your ship becomes an immobile space station; it can't even turn. Speed cannot go below 0.

It is not necessary to keep your ship designs secret from your opponent. He/she will quickly find out what you're packing when you open fire. But until then, it preserves some realism if neither player makes a point of scrutinizing the other's design sheets.

B. Design Sheets During Combat

As each weapon fires in combat, flip its counter upside-down, so you will know which weapons you haven't used yet. Turn them all right-side-up when your combat round is done. If your ship suffers damage, move the ship-damage slider to the left one digit for each point of damage suffered. When you run out of digits, your ship is destroyed. If the ship suffers a speed reduction as a result of a critical hit, place one or more "Speed -1" or "Speed -2" counters next to the speed track, to remind you that you can't accellerate to your former full speed. If a critical hit destroys your navigation, place a "Nav Hit" counter somewhere on the damage track until you make repairs. Should one of your weapons be knocked out, just remove that weapon's counter, along with its range and damage counters. Thus, the design sheet always shows you the current status of your ships.

C. Special Rules for the Leviathan

The default rules for this game just don't do justice to an "ultimate" ship like the Leviathan. The following rules apply to leviathans only:

1. Fighters carried by a leviathan don't have to fit in empty weapons spaces on the design sheet, like they do with other ships. Put them in the page margin, your pocket, or wherever they'll fit.
2. Leviathans have a limited, built-in version of Damage Control. At the start of every turn, a leviathan can repair one point of damage on the ship-damage track. This Damage Control is an integral part of the leviathan's hull and cannot be knocked out by a critical hit. Normal Damage-Control counters can be used on a leviathan as usual.

VII. Sequence of Play

When both players have designed all their ships, set them up on the map. Place each fleet on opposite ends of the map, using only the first two complete rows of each side (three rows if you need them for many ships). No stacking of multiple ships in the same hex is allowed during set-up.

On odd-numbered turns, the Yellow fleet has the initiative; on even-numbered turns, Blue has the initiative. This is reflected on the game-turn chart.

Whoever has the initiative moves all of his/her ships; then the other player moves. Then the player with the initiative moves all of his/her fighters, followed by the other player. When all movement is done, the player with the initiative chooses one weapon and fires it; then the other player chooses a weapon to shoot. Repeat until all ships have fired all their weapons. If a weapon is knocked out before it has fired, it must be the next weapon to shoot, and then it is removed from the game. If a ship is destroyed before all its weapons have fired, it can fire one weapon before blowing up or becoming a wreck. Once both players have moved and attacked, this is the end of one game turn; advance the Turn slider on its track sheet.

VIII. Movement

All ships (except those that can't move) start the game at a speed of 1. Each turn, a ship can change its speed (as shown on its speed slider) by +1 or -1, up to its maximum speed (possibly reduced by critical hits). The ship must then move exactly that many hexes, at one hex per movement point. Move your ships in any order, but each ship must finish moving before another ship can move.

If a ship's maximum speed is reduced by battle damage to less than its current speed, the ship must slow down by 1 point per turn until it is not moving faster than its new maximum speed.

If a ship's movement carries it off the game map, that ship is out of the game. The other player gets no victory points for the lost ship.

There are no zones of control around each ship; when a ship moves adjacent to an enemy ship, it does not have to stop moving.

A. Facing & Turning

Ships must always face the flat side of a hex, and can only move in the direction they are facing. A ship can turn if it has at least one movement point remaining in its move for the current turn; thus, a ship can never end its move with a turn. Other than that, a ship can do its turning at any point during its move. Turning does not use up movement points. The number of hex-faces that a ship can actually turn depends on its speed; see the Turning Table.

B. Collisions & Ramming

If a ship's move carries it onto or through another ship (friendly or otherwise) or a wreck, then a collision may take place. Roll one die. If the moving ship wants to ram the other ship, then a collision occurs on a roll of 5 or 6. But if the moving ship does not want a collision, the ships bump on a roll of 6. The ship that's being hit has no say in the matter. A ship cannot ram a ship smaller than itself, unless the target ship can't move or has a Nav Hit. The only auxiliary device that has any impact on the die roll for a collision is the displacer pod; a ship with a displacer can negate a collision if he/she rolls a 4 or better. If you try this, you can't use the displacer during the next combat phase, and you can only try it once per movement phase.

Should a collision occur, each ship suffers 1-2 points of damage (roll one die; odd numbers mean 1 point of damage, even numbers mean 2 points) and one critical hit. If a ship in a collision has frontal armor, and the collision takes place on the ship's front (which will always be the case with the ship that does the colliding), then reduce the damage from the collision by 1 for that ship; if this makes the damage 0, then the ship's critical hit is also negated. The moving ship finishes its move according to its current speed. Thus, two or more ships can end the turn stacked together.

If a ship enters a hex with more than one ship already in it, it must roll for collisions with each of them, hostile ships first, starting with the biggest. A ship can collide with only one other ship in a hex, so if a ship enters a hex

with two ships and hits the first one, it can't hit the second. However, a ship can collide with something in one hex, keep moving, collide with something else in another hex, and so on.

If two or more ships are on the same course and speed, so that they begin and end their move in the same hex, they must roll for a collision at the end of their move, one roll for each ship after the first one to arrive in the destination hex. This means ships can't travel "in close formation" unless they are prepared to face the consequences.

If two or more ships start the turn in the same hex, and none of them moves, those ships won't collide in that turn.

Ships that are destroyed by collisions, or weapons knocked out by critical hits from collisions, do *not* score victory points for the other player.

C. Fighter Movement

Fighters, with their high speed and maneuverability, move differently than other ships. A fighter has five movement points, and it can use these points for moving, turning, or any combination. Changing one hex-facing uses one movement point. A fighter can turn at any point in its move, even at the end. Also, fighters don't have to change speed gradually; they can go from stopped to full speed in one turn, and they are not required to use all their movement points each turn, or any at all.

A fighter can never accidentally collide with a ship (scout or larger), but it can choose to ram; a successful ram destroys the fighter and inflicts one point of damage on the rammed ship, with a critical hit only if the ramming roll was a 6. Ships cannot ram or collide with fighters, and can ignore them when moving. Multiple fighters in the same hex (friendly or otherwise) must check for collisions as described in the Collisions & Ramming section. Fighter-vs-fighter collisions destroy both fighters.

IX. Combat

All weapons can fire once per turn. There are no ammunition limits. Any weapon that has a target in range and in its arc of fire, may fire during combat. Weapons can shoot through occupied hexes to hit a more distant target. Only dorsal weapons and fighters can shoot at a ship in the same hex; consider the range to be 1.

A. Point-Defense Weapons

If the attacking player announces a missile attack, the defending player can shoot one or more point-defense turrets at it before the missile's attack die is rolled, as long as the point-defense turrets are on the target ship and in the correct arc of fire. The attacking player must announce that his/her attack is a missile attack before rolling, and must give the defender a chance to decide whether to use a point-defense or not. The defending player must announce his/her intent to use a point-defense before the attack roll. If a point-defense scores a hit, the missile is destroyed and does no damage.

The attacking player can use point-defense turrets against hostile fighters during his/her attack. The target fighter must be at a range of 1 and in the point-defense turret's arc of fire. Any hit destroys the fighter.

B. Hitting & Damage

The chance of a weapon hitting depends on what it is shooting at; see the Weapons Table. "d6 > 2" means that, if the die roll is higher than 2, the weapon scored a hit. Roll one die for each weapon, modifying the number if ECM pods or targeting pods are involved. If a hit is scored, and the defender wants to use a Displacer pod, this must happen after the to-hit roll, but before applying damage. Hits do the amount of damage you bought for the weapon; remember to apply the +1 modifier if the weapon is a missile, and to reduce the damage if the target ship has a Deflector Shield and/or Frontal Armor.

C. Critical Hits

If the unmodified weapon-attack roll is a 6, if the weapon's damage is not negated by deflector shields and/or frontal armor, and if the hit hasn't already destroyed its target, then roll again for extra damage on the Critical Hit Table. Auxiliary devices are considered weapons in this regard. If the critical hit is impossible (for instance, if you roll a speed reduction, but the ship's maximum speed has already been reduced to 0 by other hits), then the critical hit is ignored.

If your ship suffers a navigation hit, it cannot turn until control is restored. At the *end* of your movement phase, when all your ships have moved, roll one die for each ship that has a "Nav Hit" counter. If the die roll is less than the ship's size (2 for a destroyer, 3 for a cruiser, etc.), navigation is restored; remove the "Nav Hit" marker, and the ship can turn normally next turn. A scout can never self-repair a navigation hit, except with a Damage-Control counter.

D. Destroying a Ship

When damage falls to less than 1, the target ship is destroyed. If the damage from the final hit made the damage exactly zero (such as a one-point hit on a ship that had one point of damage remaining), the target ship turns into a wreck; turn its ship counter face-down on the map. Otherwise, the ship explodes - just remove the ship counter. Fighters never become wrecks. If a ship carrying fighters is destroyed, the fighters are also lost.

Wrecks are motionless hulks. Their only function is to obstruct other ships' movement. They cannot be destroyed by collisions, but hitting one counts as a collision against the other ship.

E. Victory Points

When a ship is destroyed in combat, the winner gets victory points equal to the ship's purchase cost, including weapons (and range/damage modifiers) and any fighters on board at the time. Destroying a fighter scores 10 VP's. Weapons knocked out by critical hits score VP's at the time they are knocked out, according to their purchase cost, including range and damage modifiers. Ships are *not* permitted to self-destruct in order to deprive your enemy of victory points.

X. Winning the Game

Whoever has the most VP's at the end of 20 turns, or is the sole survivor before then, is the winner. The winner may do a victory dance, as long as it's the Charleston.

XI. Credits

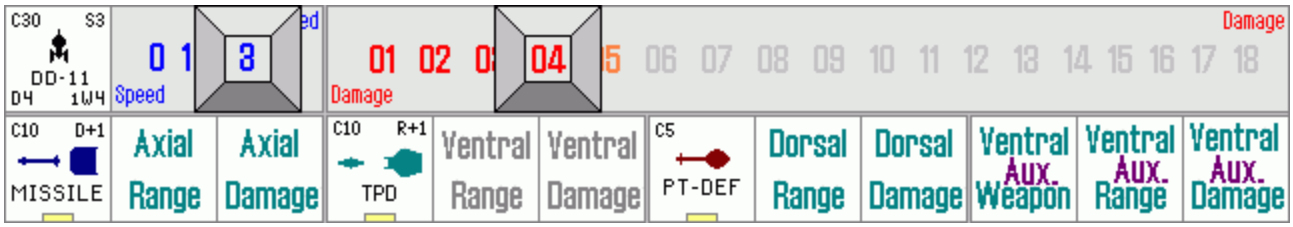
Game design, rules, graphics, HTML code, and paper cuts: Mike Fischer
Enthusiastic encouragement: Brett Crowell
Inspiration: David Ferris for his **Red Chicken Rising** rules at http://www.irvania.com, and Tim Swenson for his **Minimal Space Combat** rules at http://www.grognard.com/pub/games/board/msc.txt
Playtesters (so far): Brett Crowell

No animals were harmed during the development of this game. But many imaginary spaceships were harmed most heinously.

Appendix

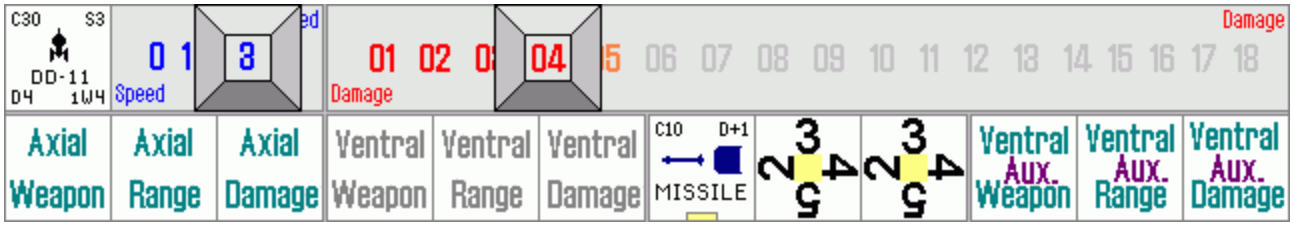
A. Sample Destroyers

These samples are meant to show how the different weapons options can be mixed and matched to create useful warships, and to get your own creative juices flowing. They also show how to use the ship-design sheets.

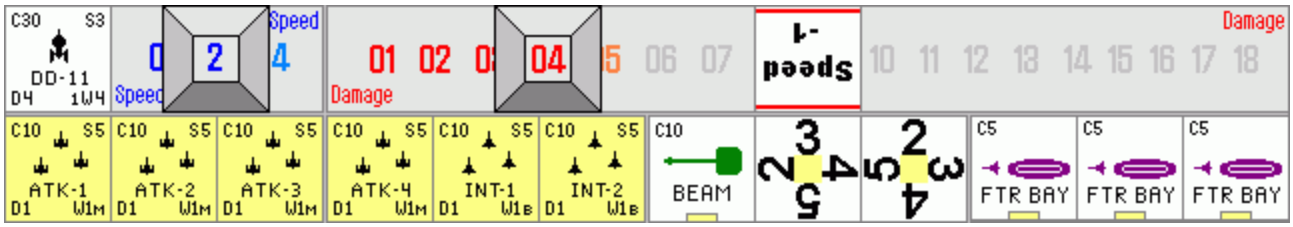


This design has a little of everything - an axial missile for hitting power, a torpedo with good arcs of fire, and 360-degree point-defense protection. *55 points*

This "torpedo boat" can reach out and touch someone from a fair distance, or sail between two enemies and shoot them both. *50 points*



This ship carries only one weapon, a missile that can blow up a destroyer with one shot, from three hexes away, in any direction. *60 points*



Trading speed for weapons is often a good choice for a carrier, which is rarely in a hurry to join a melee. This one carries a decent beam weapon and a full air wing. *70 points plus 60 for fighters*

Adding a gun mount gives a destroyer some real punch. This one packs a nasty axial weapon, with a maneuvering pod to help aim it. *90 points*

B. Suggested Scenarios

In case you want to try something a little fancier than the usual last-man-standing kind of game, I offer these suggestions. None of them have been play-tested as of this writing, but they sound reasonable. These show how the basic rules can encompass some fairly elaborate games.

- **Quality vs Quantity**
  Both players get 500 build points. Player 1 can buy only one ship, the leviathan. Player 2 can buy anything *except* a leviathan. Line up and play as usual.

- **Starbase Defense**
  Both players get 500 build points. One of Player 1's ships must be a battleship which has traded all its move points for weapons spaces, leaving it motionless. This is the starbase; set it up in the middle of the map, facing in any direction (remember, it can't turn). Player 2 can buy anything except a leviathan. Line up the ships as usual. Player 2 wins if the starbase is destroyed within 10 turns; if not, Player 1 wins.

- **Convoy Battle**
  Both players get 250 build points. Player 1 also gets five free scouts which cannot carry any weapons or auxiliaries, and whose maximum speed is 2. These are Player 1's freighters. (Player 1 does not have to tell Player 2 which of his scouts are the freighters.) Set up on opposite sides of the map as usual. Player 1 must get at least 2 freighters to the opposite edge of the map by the end of turn 16. If he does so, he wins; if not, Player 2 wins.

- **Carrier Strike**
  Both sides get 500 build points. Both must buy six fighter bays filled with fighters. Define a line down the middle of the map, separating one player's half from the other (use string if you don't want to write on the map). As long as both sides have at least one fighter, neither player's ships can come within one hex of this line; only fighters can cross to the other player's side. Once one or both player's fighters are wiped out, remove the line. Otherwise, line up and play as usual.

- **Squadrons**
  Both sides get the same number of build points (at least 500). Each player must set up half his/her ships in one corner, packed in as tightly as possible, and the other ships in the corner diagonally opposite. Play as usual. The fun begins when all four groups of ships meet in the middle.

C. Three-Player and Four-Player Rules

EasyStar can be played as a three-player game, with the following rule changes:

1. A three-player game is played as two against one.
2. Player 3, the Red fleet, must ally with either Yellow or Blue. Yellow and Blue can't be on the same team, or the turn chart won't accurately reflect who has the initiative.
3. Use a triangular map -- six map tiles for a small battle or ten for a big one.
4. The solo player gets as many build points as both of the other two players combined.
5. Each player sets up in one corner.

EasyStar can also be played as a four-player game, with the following rule changes:

1. A four-player game is played as two against two.
2. Player 3, the Red fleet, must ally with either Yellow or Blue. Player 4, the Green fleet, must ally with the other player. Yellow and Blue can't be on the same team, or the turn chart won't accurately reflect who has the initiative.
3. Use 16 map sheets, in a 4x4 pattern, or more if many ships are involved.
4. All players get the same number of build points.
5. For a fairly tame game, each player sets up in one corner of the map, with one pair of allies on one side and the other pair on the other side.
6. For a wild game, each player sets up in a corner, diagonally opposite his/her ally.