

PIONEERS



Space Probes

Orbital Colonies

And the End of All that Is

Spindrift Games



PIONEERS

"We named 'em Pioneers after the old NASA space probes. Someone here in the lab started calling 'em Pions as a cutesy nickname, and it stuck."

*An Oral History of the
2320-2324 Pioneer War*

In **PIONEERS**, you fight to liberate the Solar System from the Pions, cybernetic beings who have already conquered the Earth and much of the Solar System and nuked the Moon. You know, as one does.

PIONEERS is a tabletop roleplaying game for 3-6 players. One player takes on the role of **Mission Control** (or, *the MC* for short) and controls **the Pions** - humanity's prodigal, digital children who have returned from the depths of space with technology far beyond that of 24th Century Earth.

The each of other players creates a **Survivor** who is part of the **Rag-Tag Fugitive Resistance** striving to free the Solar System from the crushing **Occupation**.

Saving the World

As member of the Resistance, your Survivor is part of a small cell of 2 to 5 freedom fighters that undertake missions, called **Ops**, that invariably involve blowing up lots and lots of murderous robots - on Earth, in space, or on one of the **Twelve Colonies of Man** scattered across the conquered Solar System.

If you survive a deadly Op, the most you can hope for is a free drink in one of the underground speak-easies frequented by the Resistance fighters: if you fail, the best you'll get is one of those drinks lifted in honor of your sacrifice.

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"In retrospect, putting a map showing how to get back to Earth on those old-fashioned space probes probably wasn't the smartest idea."

An Oral History of the 2320-2324 Pioneer War

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Three Attributes

Your Survivor has three abilities:

Thrust, **Gyro**, and **Telemetry**.

You use **Thrust** for direct actions - to solve problems that are best solved by an application of force, whether physical or mental.

Gyro is all about speed and balance. If it has to be done quickly, gracefully, or both, then you're going to make a Gyro roll.

Telemetry covers anything requiring knowledge, whether that's the specialized knowledge of a hacker or surgeon, or just general intelligence about the enemy's movement.

Resource Pools

In addition, you have three resource pools, **Health**, **Impulse**, and **Kit**. At the start of each Op, your resource pools are set to their maximum value; while the exact value will go up or down during the Op, you can't go over your maximum value.

Health tells you how much Harm your Survivor can take before being KIA; each hit by the enemy usually does 1 to 3 Harm.

Impulse is your energy, your drive, your momentum. Your class gives you Talents that you can activate using Impulse.

Kit is an abstract measure of how much gear you have. At the beginning of each Op, you adjust your inventory by expending points from your Kit; you can also spend Kit in the field, to represent items that you had on you but didn't want to slow the game down with time-consuming inventory tracking.

Rolling the Dice

When you do an action, either in a fight or not, state which attribute you're using, then roll a number of six-sided dice equal to your score in that attribute. Check the highest number you rolled on one die against the following table:

On a...

-
- 1-2 The action **fails** and there's a **consequence**.
 - 3-4 The action **succeeds** but there's a **complication**.
 - 5-6 The action **succeeds** with **no problems**.

Survivor Creation

Creating a Survivor is dirt simple. There are just five steps, then you're done. You can fill in the fields on the Survivor Record, which is a sheet for recording your character's details.

1. Pick a Class. (p. 5)
2. Choose Your Home Colony. (p. 10)
3. Grab your Gear. (p. 11)
4. Snag a ship. (p. 29)
5. Come up with a Name.

Instructions for playing the MC come later in the rules.

Class

Your **Class** determines your attributes and pools, your talents, and your starting equipment. Pick a class from this list:

Apollo You're big, strong, and tough in a fight.

Gemini You're smart, clever, and good with technology.

Mercury You're fast, agile, and hard to pin down.

Soyuz You're a jack-of-all-trades and born leader.

The table below lists the attributes and pools for each class.

Class	Thrust	Gyro	Telemetry	Health	Impulse	Kit
Apollo	3	1	2	8	4	3
Gemini	1	2	3	6	3	6
Mercury	1	3	2	4	7	4
Soyuz	2	2	2	5	5	5

A P O L L O

Starting Gear

Armor 1-4 Assault Armor, 5-6 Tactical Vest

Weapon 1-2 Pulse Rifle, 3-4 Rocket Launcher, 5-6 Slug Rifle

Weapon 1-2 Frag Grenade, 3-4 Laser Grenade, 5-6 Pulse Grenade

Other Gear 1-4 Med Patch, 5-6 Toolkit

Ship 1-2 Mining Rig, 3-4 Ore Hauler, 5-6 Shuttle

Spend 1 Kit per list to pick instead of taking what you rolled.

Apollo Talents

Shrug It Off Spend 1 Impulse to ignore 1 helping of Harm.

Fire in the Hole Spend 1 Impulse to ignore your weapons' Friendly-Fire tags this Fight.

Rock 'n Roll Spend 1 Kit to do +1 damage with Autofire weapons this Fight.

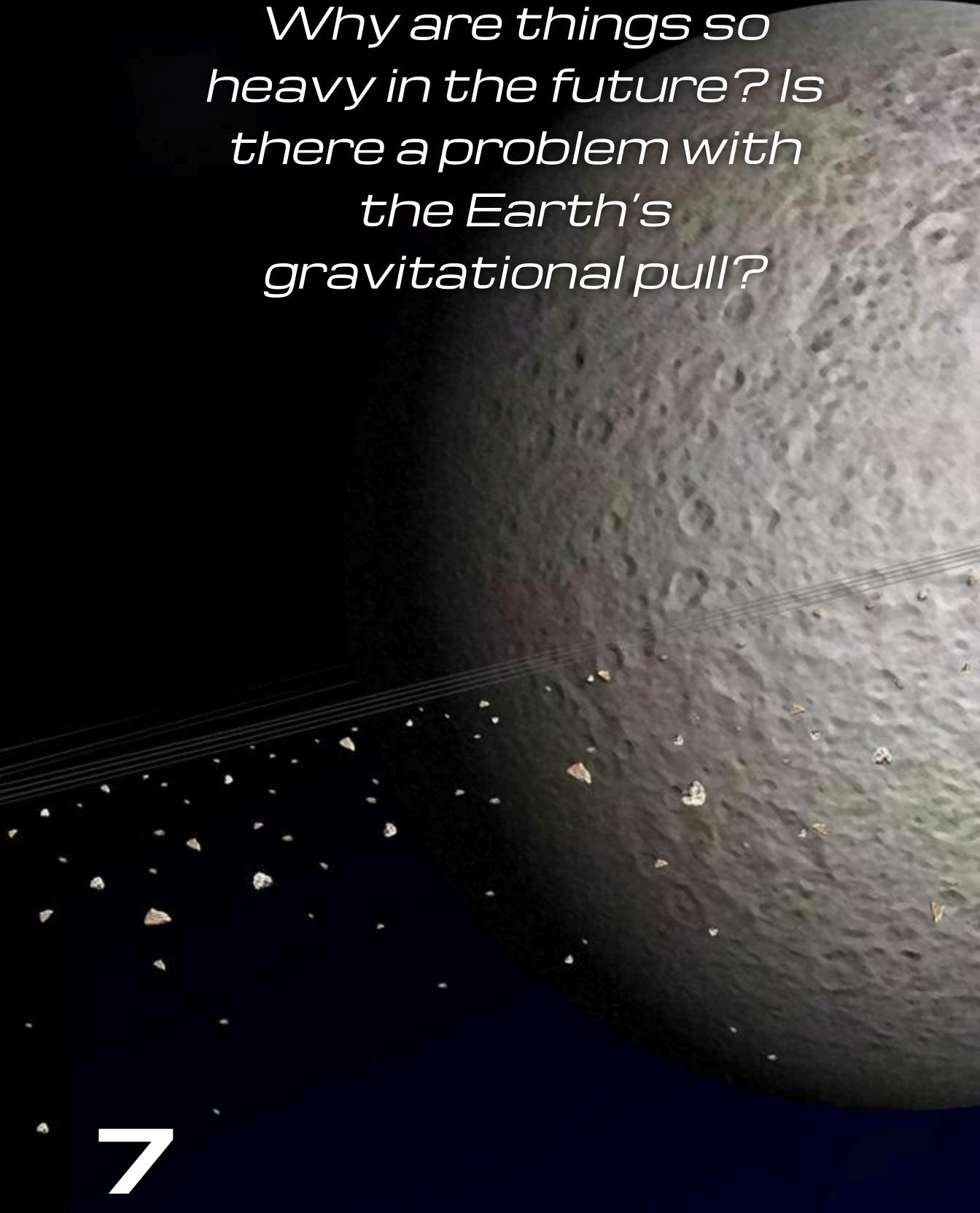
I Packed a Spare Spend 1 Kit to ignore your weapons' Reload and Single-Use tags this Fight.

Ship Talent

Gunner Spend 1 Impulse to do +1 Ship-Harm on a hit.

Thrust	Gyro	Telemetry	Health	Impulse	Kit
3	1	2	8	4	3

What you lack in subtlety, you make up in brute force.



Why are things so heavy in the future? Is there a problem with the Earth's gravitational pull?

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G E M || N ||

Gemini Talents

Electronic Countermeasures Spend 1 Kit to shut down 1 Pion until the end of the Fight.

Salvage Ops Spend 1 Impulse to gain 1 Kit from a dead Pion.

Weapon Modifications Spend 1 Kit to give your weapon Autofire, Burn, EMP, Exploding, Piercing, or Shock for this Fight.

Armorer Spend 1 Kit to fully repair any Armor.

Ship Talent

Damage Control Spend 1 Kit to repair 1 Ship-Health.

Thrust	Gyro	Telemetry	Health	Impulse	Kit
1	2	3	6	3	6

MERCURY

Starting Gear

Armor 1-4 Stealthsuit, 5-6 Energy Siphon

Weapon 1-2 two Laser Pistols, 3-4 two Slug Pistols, 5-6 one Pulse Pistol and one Taser Pistol

Weapon 1-4 Bow, 5-6 Flamethrower

Other Gear 1-4 Toolkit, 5-6 Med Patch

Ship 1-2 Mining Rig, 3-4 Racing Yacht, 5-6 Solar Glider

Spend 1 Kit per list to pick instead of taking what you rolled.

Mercury Talents

Moving Target Spend 1 Impulse to instantly change your Range Band.

Rapid Fire Spend 1 Impulse to make another attack at -1 Harm.

Gun-Kata Spend 1 Kit to use two Pistols in one attack, adding the Harm together.

Dive for Cover Spend 1 Impulse to ignore Harm from an AOE, Autofire, or Exploding attack.

Ship Talent

Ace Pilot Spend 1 Impulse to add +1 to a ship roll.

Thrust	Gyro	Telemetry	Health	Impulse	Kit
1	3	2	4	7	4

It's time to buzz the tower.

*You're everyone's
second-best friend.*

S O Y U Z

Starting Gear

Armor 1-4 Tactical Vest, 5-6 Stealthsuit

Weapon 1-4 SMG, 5-6 Autolaser

Weapon 1-4 Slug Pistol, 5-6 Pulse Pistol

Other Gear 1-4 2 Med Patches, 5-6 Long-Range Radio

Ship 1-2 Racing Yacht, 3-4 Repair Pod, 5-6 Shuttle

Spend 1 Kit per list to pick instead of taking what you rolled.

Soyuz Talents

Adaptable Spend 1 Health, Impulse or Kit to add +1 Impulse, Kit, or Health.

Resupply Spend 1 Kit to replenish anyone else's Kit total.

Rousing Pep Talk Spend 1 Impulse to replenish anyone else's Impulse total.

Field Medic Spend 1 Kit to replenish anyone else's Health total.

Ship Talent

Fleet Tactics Spend 1 Impulse to give everyone +1 on their next ship roll.

Thrust	Gyro	Telemetry	Health	Impulse	Kit
2	2	2	5	5	5

Colonial Origin

In the 24th Century, humanity has long since colonized the Solar System, building both surface bases on inhospitable planets and moons, and orbiting colonies above them.

Choose one of the following origins for your Survivor, and note it on your Survivor Record.

Callistoan You're from Jupiter's moon Callisto. +1 *Ship-Telemetry on Liquid-Hydrogen Tankers*.

Cererean You're from Ceres, in the Asteroid Belt. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Mining Rigs*.

Cynthorean You're from Venus. +1 *Ship-Thrust on Racing Yachts*.

Enceladan You're from Saturn's moon Enceladus. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Shuttles*.

Eridian You're from Eris. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Ore Haulers*.

Europan You're from Jupiter's moon Europa. +1 *Ship-Telemetry on Shuttles*.

Ganymedean You're from Jupiter's moon Ganymede.

+1 *Ship-Telemetry on Ore Haulers*.

Granger You're from O'Neill Station in the L5 point. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Repair Pods*.

Hermean You're from Mercury. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Solar Gliders*.

Leo You're from an orbital colony in Low Earth Orbit. +1 *Ship-Thrust on Comms Relays*.

Martian You're from Mars. +1 *Ship-Health on any ship*.

Plutonian You're from Pluto. +1 *Ship-Telemetry on Comms Relays*.

Selenite You're from Luna, Earth's moon. +1 *Ship-Gyro on Racing Yachts*.

Tellurian You're from Earth. *Start each operation with +1 Kit above your maximum*.

Titanian You're from Saturn's moon Titan. +1 *Ship-Telemetry on Mining Rigs*.

Uranian You're from Oberon or one of the colonies on Uranus's moons. +1 *Ship-Thrust on Liquid-Hydrogen Tankers*.

We created the Pions. We sent them before us, and followed them to space. We gave them life; they gave us the planets. We gave them a galaxy to explore. We never imagined they would want to return.

Introduction to
Earthfall: The Roots of the Pion War

Gear

When you first create your Survivor, you're given a suit of armor and two or three weapons, as shown on the page for your class.

If you don't like the results you rolled, you can spend one Kit before your mission to change those to another option on your list.

After each Op you have the option to spend 1 Kit each to change your armor or weapon for any others, including those that aren't on your starting gear list.

Armor

Armor is *ablative*, meaning that when it protects you, it becomes weaker. A new suit of armor starts out with a full set of charges, and you can repair it between Ops to reset those charges to their maximum values.

Assault Armor Ignore 1 Harm per attack (6 charges)

Energy Siphon Ignore Burn, Pulse, or Shock Harm (3 charges)

Stealthsuit Ignore Harm from *far* sources (3 charges)

Tactical Vest Ignore Harm from *close* sources (3 charges)

Vacsuit You don't get KIA if your ship is destroyed (1 charge)

Weapons

Each weapon lists the ranges at which it can be used - *close*, *mid*, and *far* - as well as the damage and any Weapon Tags (see below).

Autolaser *mid* Harm 2, Autofire, Burn

Autorifle *mid* Harm 1, Autofire, Heavy

Bow *mid, far* Harm 1, Reload

Flamethrower *close* Harm 2, AOE, Burn

Frag Grenade *close* Harm 1, Exploding, Friendly-Fire, Single-Use

Grenade Mortar *mid* Harm 3, Exploding, Reload, Tactical

Laser Grenade *close* Harm 1, AOE, Burn, Friendly-

Fire, Single-Use

Laser Pistol *close* Harm 1, Handgun, Burn

Laser Rifle *mid, far* Harm 2, Burn

Pulse Grenade *close* Harm 1, AOE, EMP, Friendly-

Fire, Single-Use

Pulse Pistol *close* Harm 1, EMP, Handgun

Pulse Rifle *mid* Harm 2, EMP, Heavy

Rocket Launcher *mid* Harm 3, Exploding, Heavy,

Reload

SMG *close, mid* Harm 1, Autofire

Shotgun *close* Harm 2

Slug Pistol *close* Harm 1, Handgun

Slug Rifle *mid, far* Harm 2, Heavy

Sniper Rifle *far* Harm 2, Scope, Tactical

Taser Pistol *close* Harm 1, Handgun, Shock

Weapon Tags

These tags apply to both personal weaponry and weapons on spacecraft (p. 29).

AOE Affects multiple targets.

Autofire Can hit multiple targets.

Burn Does burn damage.

EMP Does pulse damage.

Exploding Does explosive damage against multiple targets.

Friendly Fire Targets allies in the range band.

Handgun +1 Harm when fired with Gyro.

Heavy +1 Harm when fired with Thrust.

Piercing Ignores Resist.

Reload Sometimes requires reloading.

Scope Does +1 Harm if you remain stationary when firing.

Self-Destructive Damages wielder.

Single-Use You can only use this weapon once.

Shock Does shock damage.

Tactical Does +1 Harm when fired with Telemetry.

Other Items

PIONEERS isn't a subtle game. You get a mission, go in, kill robots, and get out. There's not a lot of room for the niceties - your Survivors are Resistance freedom fighters constantly on the run. There's not a need for specialized equipment. We assume your Survivor has the basics to do their jobs:

Clothes and a Backpack

A Toolkit for basic repairs

Water/Rations dried "astronaut food"

A Map of the mission area

If you need anything else, you can spend 1 Kit before or during the mission to say you brought it with you.

Fights

PIONEERS is a game of violent resistance to the Occupation, so of course violence is likely to ensue. We call each instance of that a **Fight**.

In a fight, the players and the MC alternate turns - each of the players gets to have their Survivor do something, and then the MC takes a turn for the Pions.

Range Bands

Unlike some tabletop RPGs, **PIONEERS** is not concerned with exact position and distance; instead, participants in a fight are classified as being in *close*, *mid*, or *far* range, relative to the other combatants. This affects the effectiveness of most weapons and can interact with class's Talents.

Player Turns

On the the players' turn, they can act in whatever order they like, until every player has had to chance to act.

When it's your turn, you can do any or all of these:

1. **Change your Range Band** by one
- *close* to *mid*, *mid* to *close* or *far*, or *far* to *mid*. (You can't jump from *close* to *far* or vice versa.)
2. **Make an Attack** against one of the Pions.
3. **Use Your Talents** by paying a cost from the appropriate pool. You can use as many Talents as you wish during your turn, but you can only activate each Talent once during that turn.

"I fuckin' hate these goddamn space probes. 'Explore the universe and report back' - fuck that, does us no damn good down here on planet Earth. Earth first, always."

An Oral History of the 2320-2324 Pioneer War

Attacking

To attack, choose which weapon you're using and which attribute you're using for the attack - *Thrust* for a direct attack, *Gyro* for quick strikes or feints, and *Telemetry* for a steady, aimed attack - and pick your targets.

Roll a number of dice (d6s) equal to your score in the attribute, then compare the highest die to the total.

On a **5 or 6**, you hit your target and do damage equal to the Harm rating of your weapon.

If the high score is a **3 or 4**, you still do the same Harm, but there's also a *Complication*, which means the MC gets to have the Pions do something - usually doing Harm to your Health.

If you didn't roll higher than a **1 or 2**, then you failed to Harm your target, and the MC can make a move for the Pions.

Doing Harm

When you successfully hit a Pion with a weapon, you do Harm equal to the weapon's Harm score, plus other modifiers such as the weapon's tags.

Most weapons do *untyped Harm*, meaning it's not some energy type. Weapons with specific tags do *burn*, *exploding*, *pulse* or *shock Harm*.

If a target has a **Resist** tag against a type of harm, they take 1 less point of Harm from the attack. Conversely, if they have a **Vulnerability** to that type of harm, they take an extra 1 point of Harm.

Each Pion is resistant and vulnerable to different types of attacks, so it pays to switch up your tactics during a fight as you discover how it reacts to each.

The MC's Turn

During the MC's turn, they can do any or all of these:

1. **Change the Range Band** for some or all of the Pions, relative to the Survivors.
2. Make a **Big Change** in the fight.
3. Have the **Pions make moves**.
4. Have the **Pions counter-attack**.

At the end of the MC's turn, they generate Drops, if appropriate.

Big Changes

A Big Change means that the battle is shifting in some way - it might be that the Pions retreat to a secured location. It

could be that a new, larger model of Pion arrives. The environment could be working against the Survivors - barriers slamming down, hatches opening to space, a rumbling geiser erupts.

The idea is not to undo the players' hard-earned victories but to change things up so that their tactics evolve.

Pion Moves

Each model of Pion has three "moves" listed that describe their usual tactics in battle. These aren't just methods of attack but give a specific feel to each type of Pion - playing to these standard moves rewards the players for learning what each does, while subverting the moves can be a Big Change itself.



Pion Counter-Attacks

Usually, the MC doesn't need to specifically have the Pions attack; complications rolled by the players are usually enough to keep the flow of damage in both directions. However, a concentrated counter-attack could be the Big Change that the MC chooses during their turn.

When this happens, the MC describes the type of attack or attacks used by each enemy, and the players can describe how their Survivor is avoiding the Harm. They roll the appropriate number of dice and check the high number as always: on a 5 or 6, they escape taking any Harm; 3 or 4 they take Harm equal to half the Pion's Harm rating; and 1 or 2 they take the full amount of Harm.

Drops

At the end of the MC's turn, they roll 1d6 for each enemy that died since their last turn.

Roll Pool	Example
1-2 +1Health	Defeating the Pion gave a quick opportunity to bandage wounds.
3-4 +1Impulse	The rush of victory is invigorating.
5-6 +1Kit	Scraps of Pions can be used for a variety of purposes.

The players can then decide among themselves who will claim each drop. No player can exceed their maximum in a pool.

The Solar System

By the first part of the 24th Century, mankind has left their home planet of Earth and spread throughout the Solar System.

The first surface colonies on the Moon and Mars were soon joined by orbital colonies in long, rotating spheres or wide, circling toruses, housing up to several million people. Even more remote

settlements were built in asteroids or buried into the surface of terrestrial planets.

Beginning with Mars and then Ceres, some colonies were granted independence, allowing them to function as the equivalent of national governments. The costly and asymmetrical Colonial War of the 2270s granted independence to all human colonies outside of the Earth's orbit.

... WILL REPEAT ON THIS FREQUENCY. BROADCASTING ON UNITED COLONIES EMERGENCY RADIO BAND 143.625 MHZ. MAJOR ATTACK ON PLANET EARTH AND ALL LEO ORBITAL HABITATS BY UNKNOWN FORCE UNDERTAKEN. GTSRKO IS OFFLINE. 文昌航天发射 IS OFFLINE. ALL COMMS ANALOG VOICE ONLY. UPDATES TO BE BROADCAST IN 300 SECO - OH DEAR GOD ABOVE ALDRINPORT IS GONE, THEY BROKE THE MOON, THEY BRO-

Transcript of
emergency broadcast,
unknown speaker.
June 19 2320

Location Tags

These are tags that apply to locations within the Solar System that can be used to give MCs and players an idea as to what any particular planet or satellite is like, as well as the level of Pion influence.

For more information on locations in the Solar System, including photographs or artists' renderings, check out [NASA's web site](#) (p. 0)! Apart from being set 300 years in the future and occupied by humans and killer robots, the Solar System of **PIONEERS** is the same Solar System we inhabit today.

Atmosphere The location has a breathable atmosphere.

Blocade Currently blockaded by the Pions.

Cold It's too cold for a human to survive without protection.

Colony Recognized as an independent colony.

Farming Farming is a major industry.

High-G The gravity is relatively high.

Hot It's too hot for a human to survive without protection.

Ice Frozen water can be found at this location.

Life This location has native life forms.

Low-G The gravity is relatively low.

Manufacturing The manufacture of goods is a major industry.

Mining Mining of metals is a major industry.

Occupation Under military occupation by Pion forces.

Orbit At least one orbital settlement exists.

Prison The location has at least one penal colony.

Siege Currently besieged by Pion forces.

Spaceport Facilities for spacecraft landing and launching.

Surface At least one surface settlement exists.

Underground At least one underground settlement exists.

Volcanos The location has active volcanos.

Water Liquid water can be found at this location.

Earth Orbit

Earth is home to the vast majority of the human race, and is surrounded by large orbital colonies in Low Earth Orbit used for farming.

Luna is the second most populated colony and is primarily technological workers. It's also the communications hub of the Solar System ... or at least, it was, until key stations were struck by Pion nuclear weapons.

Located in the La Grange L5 point, O'Neill Station is the largest orbital colony in the Solar System. McKendree Station,

O'Neill's sister station, was cataclysmically destroyed in 2150 in the largest space disaster in human history - with over 2 million humans dying instantly.

Earth Maximum Population, Atmosphere, Blockade, Farming, Ice, High-G, Life, Manufacturing, Occupation, Orbit, Spaceport, Surface, Underground, Volcanos, Water

Luna High Population, Colony, Low-G, Mining, Siege, Spaceport, Surface, Underground

O'Neill Station Medium Population, Atmosphere, Farming, High-G, Occupation, Spaceport

Inner Planets

Mercury is a very hot planet on the side facing the sun, and a very cold planet on the side facing away from the sun. Low-scale mining takes place there, plus solar batteries store photonic energy for shipment throughout the Solar System.

Venus has floating cloud cities occupied by the wealthy above, and gas miners on the lower decks. The atmosphere remains poisonous to human lungs, but extensive glass walls give the Venusian colonies the appearance of domed cities.

Mars is the most populous and oldest colony in the Solar System. Its two moons are known for their shipbuilding, although both have been seized by the Pions and are being refitted to produce Pion craft instead.

Ceres is the largest and most populous planetoid in the asteroid belt. Once the site of a major mining operation, the asteroid is honeycombed with occupied tunnels and caverns. Ceres serves as the capital of the Asteroid Belt and prior to the coming of the Pions was a major transit port between the Inner Planets and the Outer Planets.

Mercury Low Population, Bright, Cold, Colony, Hot, Mining, Orbit, Siege, Surface, Underground

Venus Medium Population, Colony, High-G, Hot, Life, Mining, Occupation, Orbit, Spaceport, Surface

Mars High Population, Cold, Colony, Ice, Manufacturing, Mining, Occupation, Orbit, Spaceport, Surface, Underground

Ceres Low Population, Blockade, Cold, Colony, Ice, Low-G, Mining, Spaceport, Underground

Jupiter

After Earth and Mars, Jupiter is the most populated planetary system in the Solar System. No one dwells on the gas giant, of course, but all but one of Jupiter's largest moons are home to Earth colonies.

Europa is known for the indigenous life forms in its chilly seas - a primitive form of life akin to brine shrimp - that was the source of the first extraterrestrial life found by humans. Europa is currently under a crushing Pion blockade, but to date, they have attempted no landings there.

Cleomestra Station orbits Ganymede, the largest moon in the Solar System: the Station is the second most distant

orbital colony from Earth. Prior to occupation by the Pions, Ganymede was a commerce port, centered on the ice-mining trade.

Callisto's surface is dotted with numerous small manufacturing facilities, many of them almost entirely automated, that are actively being bombarded by Pion *Sakigake* ships.

Europa Medium Population, Cold, Colony, Life, Low-G, Blockade, Surface, Water

Ganymede Low Population, Cold, Colony, Ice, Low-G, Mining, Occupation, Orbit

Io Cold, Hot, Low-G, Volcanos

Callisto Low Population, Cold, Colony, Ice, Low-G, Manufacturing, Siege, Surface

Saturn

Even in the 24th Century, the ringed giant remains widely acknowledged as among the most breathtaking locations in the Solar System. Of Saturn's many moons, only Titan and Enceladas have sizeable populations, with Rhea being a research station.

The methane-based native life forms of Titan are found in its icy methane seas and are massive, ponderous creatures somewhere between a coral colony and enormous whales. Idaea Station, which orbits Titan, is the furthest orbital colony from Earth and was built using materials mined on Jupiter's moon Ganymede

rather than on ores mined in the asteroid belt.

Enceladus's colony is the oldest among Saturn's moons, and one of the few sources of liquid water in the outer planets.

Titan Low Population, Blockade, Cold, Colony, Life, Low-G,

Orbit

Rhea Minimal Population, Cold, Ice, Low-G

Iapetus Cold, Ice, Low-G

Enceladus Low Population, Cold, Colony, Low-G,
Surface, Water

Dione Cold, Low-G

Tethys Cold, Ice, Low-G

Mimas Cold, Ice, Low-G

Uranus

Terrorists claiming to represent the five distant Uranian colonies incited the bloody Colonial War, described at the time as "Mankind's Last War."

Combining a frontier toughness with deep religious convictions, colonists on Uranus's moons speak of themselves as Uranians first, not individual colonies as found in Jupiter's and Saturn's satellites.

Oberon is the nominal capital of the Uranian colonies and the center of their growing spiritual movement.

Umbriel Minimal Population, Cold, Ice, Low-G, Mining, Underground

Titania Minimal Population, Ice, Cold, Low-G, Surface

Oberon Low Population, Cold, Colony, Ice, Low-G, Mining, Spaceport, Surface

Ariel Minimal Population, Cold, Low-G, Mining, Underground

Miranda Minimal Population, Cold, Low-G, Industry, Underground

Neptune

Once thought to be a prime location for extraterrestrial life, Neptune's chilly moon of Triton is home to just a small ice mining colony affiliated with the Plutonian colony.

Triton Minimal Population, Cold, Ice, Low-G, Surface

Trans-Neptunian Space

Pluto is the second most distant human colony and is primary for astronomical research: in 2309, they detected anomalous radio signals from the vicinity of Epsilon Eridani that continue to defy human explanation. The sub-surface astro-colony was the first human settlement to encounter the returning

Pions. Pluto fell to their troops and went radio-silent a full three days before the attack on Luna, although few seemed to seem to care at the time.

Eris is on the farthest edge of the Solar System and is a mining penal colony. Its remoteness let it escape Pion notice: with the occupation of Earth, the prison's wardens soon lost control of the inmates, who seized control of the distant colony. Of the few convicts who have managed to leave the dwarf planet, most have joined with the Resistance.

Pluto Minimal Population, Cold, Low-G, Occupation, Spaceport, Underground

Eris Minimal Population, Cold, Prison, Mining, Spaceport, Underground

The Pions

Six classes of pions have been positively identified, although there may be more as yet unseen.

Cassini Diplomat

Mariner Troop transport

Rover Infantry

Ulysses Commander

Venera Air Support

Viking Marine

Mariner

The largest of the non-vessel Pions, they're less like individual robots and more like small shuttlecraft used as troop transports. Their rectangular bodies are the size of a large truck and have fore- and aft-facing cannons.

Health 20 (Ship-2)

Vulnerable explosive

Thunder Cannons *mid, far* Harm 4, Exploding

Moves Lift off, disgorge troops, hover precipitously

Cassini

The only pions who have verbally spoken with humans. Roughly humanoid, slender, eight feet tall, and with clear domes over their blinking cybernetic brains. They're the spokesrobots for the Occupation.

Health 5

Vulnerable pulse

Finger Lasers *close, mid* Harm 2, Burn

Moves Issue threats, call for help, strategic withdrawal

"We were just trying to make them more like us - more human, with a range of simulated emotions. And that was the problem, we made them **too much** like us."

An Oral History of the 2320-2324 Pioneer War

Rover

These pions are about the size of a large dog; their four limbs are made to fold inward, or extend to maneuver over obstacles. They're the rank-and-file infantry of the Occupation.

Health 4

Vulnerable explosive

Slugthrowers *close, mid* Harm 1

Laser Torch *close* Harm 1

Moves Swarm the humans, obey orders, breach defenses

Ulysses

The Ulysses pions are the command-and-control leaders of pion ground forces, including the rovers and the vikings.

They're shaped like six-legged mechanical spiders about the size of a small car, with sensors in all directions.

Health 7

Vulnerable pulse

Micro-scramjet Swarms *all* Harm 4, Exploding

Moves Analyze tactics, coordinate troops, missile lock

Venera

Venera pions are the air support for ground operations, offering eye-in-the-sky intelligence reports to those on the ground. They look the most like old NASA probes of any pions, resembling armored viking orbiters.

Health 6

Vulnerable burn

Focused Microwave Pulse close, mid Harm

2, Burn

Moves Transmit tactical telemetry, evasive maneuvers, crash and burn

Viking

The viking-class pions are the most feared by resistance fighters, as they're the heavy troopers of the Occupation. Reinforced weapon mounts surround a cylindrical central body mounted on 12 flexible legs of variegated size.

Health 9

Vulnerable nothing known

Overkill Onslaught close, mid Harm 5

Moves Take the beachhead, support mission objective, go down fighting

Ships

PIONEERS isn't just a game that takes place on the surface of planets - there's just as much that happens in the dark void of space.

Instead of the players all serving as crew on one large ship, each Survivor has access to one ship, randomly determined at character creation.

This section presents general rules on spacecraft and ship-to-ship combat; for examples of ships, read about the **rag-tag fugitive fleet** (p. 33) and the **Pion ships** (p. 38) in later sections.

The **Resistance Ops** (p. 43) has details on missions that happen both primarily in space and in a mixture of planetary and space action.

Ship Stats

Each ship is defined by the following stats:

Thrust Which works as the personal attribute, but for the ship.

Gyro Also works as the personal attribute.

Telemetry And also the same as the personal attribute.

Health Ships are rated with Ship-Health scores; each Ship-Health point is equal to 10 personal Health points. Things that heal Ship-Health can't heal personal Health, and vice versa. Ship-Health is lost only to weapons that do Ship-Harm.

Resist and Vulnerable Ships resistant to certain attacks take 1 less Ship-Harm from those attacks, while those vulnerable to such attacks take 1 more Ship-Harm.

Mount Points These are an abstraction of the ability to add weapons and other devices onto a ship. Most ships have between 1 and 4 Mount Points. At the start or end of an op, a player can spend 1 Kit to swap 1 piece of mounted gear for another.

Tags Like weapon tags and system tags, ship tags give a ship new abilities. At the start or end of an op, a player can spend 2 Kit to swap 1 Tag for another.

Ship Fights

Ship fights work exactly like normal fights, except that instead of using your Survivor's Thrust, Gyro, or Telemetry, you use the ship's attribute.

If a ship is destroyed, anyone on board is KIA unless the ship has the EVA tag, the ship has Escape Pods, or a person is wearing a vacsuit (p. 11).

At the end of their turn, the MC still **rolls as normal for drops** (p. 17) for any Pion killed, but uses the following table instead:

Roll Pool	Example
1-3 +1 Ship-Health	With one less Pion to worry about, the pilot can get their ship running again.
4-6 +1 Impulse	Acts of destruction only spur some people forward toward ... even more destruction.

Ship-Ranges

Ranges in spacecraft fights use the same *close*, *mid*, *far* bands as personal fights, but refer specifically to *close-ship*, *mid-ship*, and *far-ship* ranges. All personal range bands are within *close-ship* range.

Ship-Talents and Regular Talents

Each class has one Ship-Talent that applies only to spacecraft fights; it can't be used in regular fights. Likewise, no standard Talents can be used in a ship-to-ship fight.

Ship-Mounted Equipment

These weapons or other devices are attached to a ship's mount points. The tags for ship equipment are equivalent to the parallel tags for personal weapons (p. 12).

Asteroid Drill *close-ship* Harm Ship-2

Booster Rocket *mid-ship, far-ship* Harm Ship-5, Explosive, Single-Use

Docking Clamps *close-ship* Harm none or Ship-1; prevents other vessel from moving

EMP Burster *close-ship* Harm Ship-4, Pulse, Single-Use

Escape Pods crew not KIA when ship destroyed

Flak Cannon *close-ship* Harm Ship-2, AOE, Exploding

Fuel Reserve *close-ship* Harm Ship-3 (explosive) + Ship-3 (burn), Single-Use

Gatling Laser *mid-ship* Harm Ship-3, Autofire, Burn

Jumpstart Hawser *close-ship* Harm Ship-1, Shock

Laser Cannon *mid-ship, far-ship* Harm Ship-1, Burn

Laser Refractor *close-ship, mid-ship* Harm Ship-2, Burn

Manipulator Arm *close-ship* Harm Ship-1; can move objects around

Micro-Nuke *close-ship* Harm Ship-6 (explosive) + Ship-6 (burn) + Ship-6 (burn) + Ship-6 (pulse), AOE, Friendly Fire, Self-Destructive, Single-Use

Microwave Scrambler *mid-ship, long-ship* Harm Ship-1, Pulse

Ore Extractor *close-ship* Harm Ship-3, Shock

Osmium Ballista *mid-ship* Harm Ship-5, Reload

Patch Kit *close-ship* Repairs Health Ship-1

Railgun *far-ship* Harm Ship-4, Reload, Scope

Ramming Spike Ship takes only one third of its maximum Health when using Ramming Speed.

Refueling Tether *close-ship* Harm Ship-1, Burn

Seeker Mines *close-ship* Harm Ship-2, Explosive

Tesla-Coil Turret *close-ship, mid-ship* Harm Ship-2, Shock

Van de Graaff Howitzer *mid-ship, far-ship* Harm Ship-3, Pulse

Welding Torch *close-ship, mid-ship* Harm Ship-2, Burn

Ship Tags

These tags give ships additional abilities. At the start or end of an op, a player can spend 2 Kit to switch one tag for another.

Atmospheric Can touch down or launch in an atmosphere.

Balanced Add 1 to Gyro.

Cargo Can carry cargo, including a ship of Health up to half its' Health.

Compact Ship can't be targeted at Close-Ship range.

EVA Pilots can easily eject in space.

Networked Other pilots can use this ship's Telemetry.

Nimble Ship can't be targeted at Mid-Ship range.

Passengers The ship can carry passengers – a number equal to its Health squared.

Ramming Speed Make a close attack with Thrust to do Harm equal to its maximum Health, take Harm equal to half its maximum Health.

Reinforced Bulkheads Add 1 to Health.

Sensor Array Add 1 to Telemetry.

Stealth Ship can't be targeted at Long-Ship range.

Tailgunner The ship's mounted weapons can be fired by a co-pilot.

Turbocharged Add 1 to Thrust.

The Resistance Fleet

With the Solar System's small military forces disabled or destroyed in the initial Pion attack, the Resistance has been forced to assemble a rag-tag fleet comprised of ships not normally used in battle.

The most common ship types are:

Comms Relay

Liquid-Hydrogen Tanker

Mining Rig

Ore Hauler

Racing Yacht

Repair Pod

Shuttle

Solar Glider

Comms Relay

These ships were constructed from old communications satellites.

Thrust 1

Gyro 2

Telemetry 3

Health Ship-4

Resist shock

Vulnerable pulse

Mount Points 2 (Microwave Scrambler, EMP Burster)

Tags Networked

Names Ansible, Molniya, Syncrom, Telstar Venus Equilateral

Liquid-Hydrogen Tanker

Large, ponderous tankers that actually move quite quickly when they get up to speed.

Thrust 3

Gyro 2

Telemetry 1

Health Ship-8

Resist pulse

Vulnerable burn

Mount Points 4 (Docking Clamps, Escape Pods, Fuel Reserve x2)

Tags Ramming Speed, Tailgunner

Names *Auriga, Kobayashi Maru, Raza, Valdez, Yamato*

Mining Rig

Primarily used in the asteroid belt to mine ores.

Thrust 2

Gyro 2

Telemetry 2

Health Ship-3

Resist explosive

Vulnerable burn

Mount Points 2 (Asteroid Drill, Ore Extractor)

Tags Compact, EVA

Names *Cavendish, Herschel, Morrison, Piazzi, Tylium*

Ore Hauler

Largest ships in the Resistance fleet, but lacking in mount points for its size.

Thrust 3

Gyro 1

Telemetry 2

Health Ship-10

Resist everything

Vulnerable none

Mount Points 2 (Escape Pods, Flak Cannon)

Tags Cargo x2, Ramming Speed, Tailgunner

Names *Cygnus, Kate Rice, Narada, Nostromo, Snark*

Racing Yacht

A sleek vessel not designed for space combat.

Thrust 2

Gyro 3

Telemetry 1

Health Ship-5

Resist shock

Vulnerable pulse

Mount Points 2 (Escape Pods, Raybeam Cannon)

Tags Atmospheric, Nimble, Passengers, Tailgunner

Names *Christina, Double Down, Mariquita, Prometheus, Splendour*

Repair Pod

Small and maneuverable with tools for repairing other ships in battlefield conditions.

Thrust 1

Gyro 2

Telemetry 3

Health Ship-2

Resist shock

Vulnerable burn

Mount Points 2 (Patch Kit, Jumpstart Hawsers)

Tags Compact, EVA

Names *Betty, Bowman, Discovery Two, Icarus, Palomino*

Shuttle

The workhorses of the Resistance: able to fly, land, and lift off in an atmosphere.

Thrust 2

Gyro 2

Telemetry 2

Health Ship-5

Resist none

Vulnerable none

Mount Points 4 (Manipulator Arm, Laser Refractor, Booster Rockets x2)

Tags Atmospheric, Cargo, Passengers

Names *Columbia, Galileo, Moonraker, Narcissus, Salmacis*



Solar Glider

An agile, reflective ship with solar sails and a tiny radar signature.

Thrust 2

Gyro 3

Telemetry 1

Health Ship-1

Resist burn

Vulnerable shock

Mount Points 1 (Seeker Mines)

Tags EVA, Nimble, Stealth

Names *Blanchard, Kahanamoku, Norrin, Paskowitz, Slater*

Pion Spacecraft

Pion ships are essentially huge, self-piloting robot vehicles; each is controlled by redundant central computers, and has no separate pilot.

The five known types of Pion ships are:

Genesis Worldship

Kosmos Carrier

Mariner Troop transport and lander

Sakigake Artillery Ship

Zond Interdictor

Genesis

Only one of these is ships is known to exist, and that's fortunate. Nearly the size of O'Neill Station, *Genesis* is a mobile battlestation that was at first mistaken for a small natural satellite, but this is no moon.

Genesis is only found in Earth orbit or nearby.

Health Ship-1000

Vulnerable nothing

Ship-to-Ship Defense Batteries close-
ship Harm Ship-2, Burn

Pulse Cannons mid-ship Harm Ship-4, Pulse

Tracer Railguns far-ship Harm Ship-6, Autofire

Moves Rain death and destruction upon the Earth, direct
the fleet, orbit ominously

Kosmos

A total of 8 *Kosmos* carriers have been identified by Resistance Intel Officers. One is in Earth orbit, and another in Lunar orbit. Every human colony under a blockade - Ceres, Europa, and Titan - has a *Kosmos* craft stationed nearby, and three more prowl the reaches of the Solar System.

Their primary function is akin to an aircraft carrier. They have facilities for creating and launching the *Zond* attack interceptor craft, and landing facilities for those and other Pion ships, including hangars for *Mariners*.

Health Ship-50

Vulnerable burn

Electrostatic Defense Field

Generators close-ship Harm Ship-2, AOE, Shock

Moves Launch interdictors, fire point defense guns, recall Zonds

Mariner

Mariners are the smallest of the Pion ships, even smaller than the *Zonds*. Unlike most spacecraft, they *can* be affected by personal-level weaponry: see the section on planetary Pions [for their stats in a personal context](#) (p. 26).

In addition to transporting troops, *Mariners* also move Cassini-class Pions and valuable human prisoners within planetary systems. They're found throughout the Solar System.

Health Ship-2

Vulnerable explosive

Attack none

Moves Enter atmosphere, dock with capital ship, reload troops

Sakigake

Smaller than the *Kosmos*-class carriers, *Sakigake* craft are primarily weapons of mass destruction that can attack from the edge of a planet's orbit. They're mostly used to shell occupied planets that get out of line and destroy infrastructure on colonies that resist traditional occupation. *Sakigakes* are found wherever the Pions are actively besieging a colony - Mercury, Luna, and Callisto.

At least two dozen *Sakigake* are known to exist; they usually travel in pairs, with *Zond* escorts. Although they pack a devastating punch, *Sakigakes* are, relatively speaking, glass cannons.

Health Ship-10

Vulnerable pulse

Laser Bombardment Cannons far-ship

Harm Ship-6, AOE, Burn, Reload

Moves Swath of destruction, recharge cannons, retreat to a safe distance

Zond

Zond-class craft are agile and deadly interceptor craft that hunt in packs like wolves or sharks. They're most frequently encountered near *Kosmos* carriers or *Genesis*, although they can be found as escorts for any other Pion craft.

Their inability to function in any kind of atmosphere is the only factor limiting their deadliness. Resistance pilots using **shuttles** (p. 36) or **racing yachts** (p. 35) have learned to ditch their *Zond* pursuers with a dive into an atmosphere - even one that's not breathable by humans.

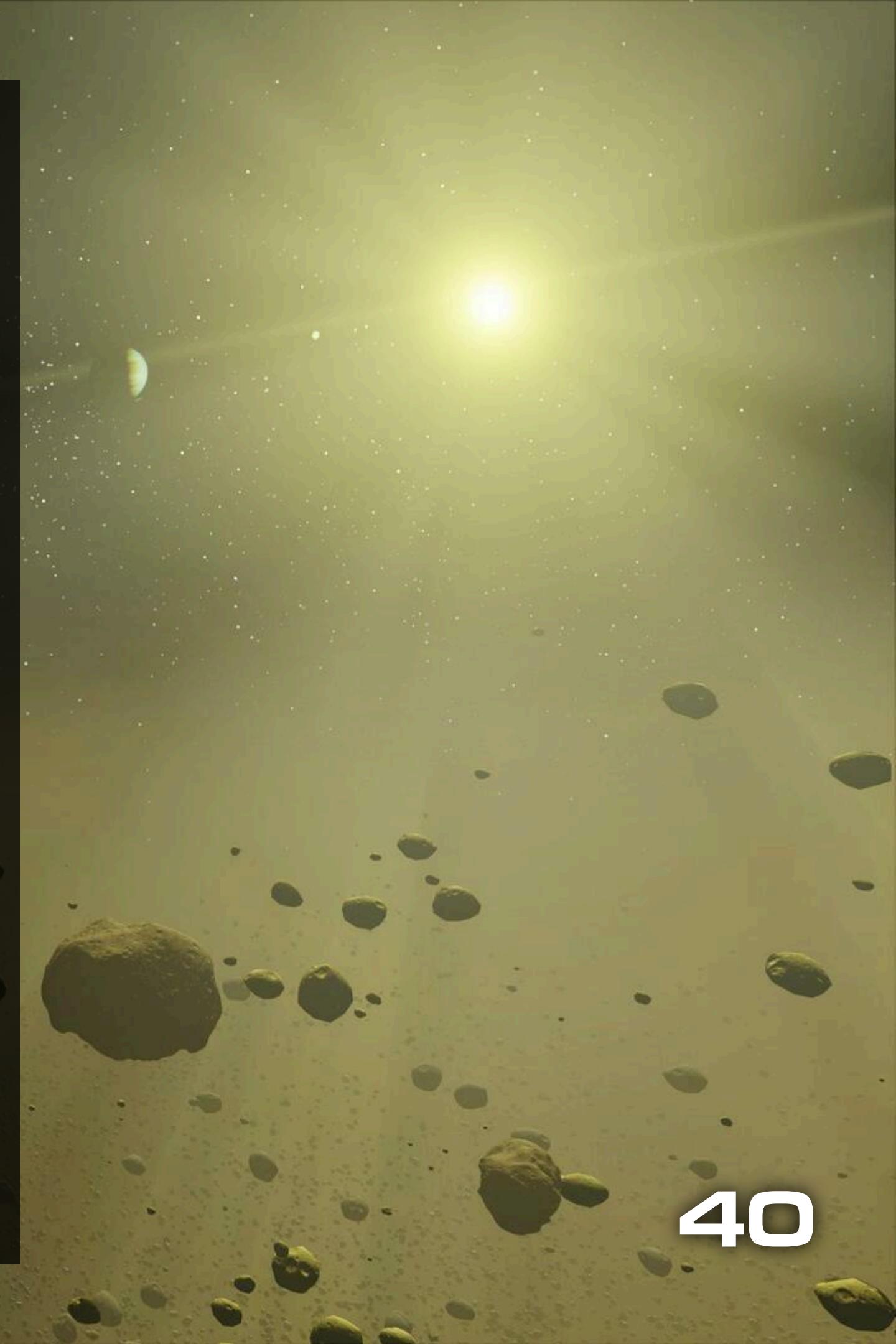
Health Ship-4

Vulnerable shock

Pulsed Maser Cannon close-ship, mid-ship

Harm Ship-2, Pulse

Moves Concentrate on the leader, break off attack, suicide run





Mission Control

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Roleplaying the Pions

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The Question of Why?

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Resistance Ops

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Op Types

There are three kinds of Ops:

Planetary Ops

Space Ops

Combined Ops

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Planetary Ops

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Die Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer |
| 2 | 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer |
| 3 | 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer |
| 4 | 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer |
| 5 | 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer |

Die Roll Result

- 6 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer

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Space Ops

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erat augue vel ante.

Die Roll Result

- 1 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 2 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 3 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 4 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 5 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer

Die Roll Result

- 6 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer

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Combined Ops

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Die Roll Result

- 1 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 2 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 3 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 4 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer
- 5 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer

Die Roll Result

- 6 1-2 something happens 3-4
something else happens 5 nothing
happens 6 everything happens this
is extra text to make it longer

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Mission Prep

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Travel Time

Obviously, the Solar System is huge. With realistic travel times, it could take years to get from one side of it to another. If the travel time ever matters, here are some approximate values you can use.

Travel between Earth and O'Neill Station takes 1d6 hours, as does travel between Earth and Luna.





For travel within the inner planets - Mercury to Mars - roll 1d6 for the travel time, in days. Add 2 days for travel to or from Ceres.

For travel from the inner planets to the outer planets, roll 1d6 days and add the base travel time from the table below.

For travel between two outer planets, use the higher base travel time, plus 1d6 weeks.

Travel time between moons of the same outer planet takes 1d6 hours.

Outer Planet	Base Travel Time
Jupiter	1 week
Saturn	2 weeks
Uranus	5 weeks (1 month)
Neptune	8 weeks (2 months)
Pluto	11 weeks (3 months)
Eris	19 weeks (4 months)

Post-Op Recuperation

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Credits

This game was created by [Cadera Spindrift](#).

PIONEERS was created as part of the [LUMEN Jam](#) hosted by [Gila RPGs](#).

This game is Illuminated, and is made using the LUMEN system created by Spencer Campbell of GilaRPGs. This game is not affiliated with Gila RPGs.

All art is courtesy of NASA and is in the public domain. Use of these images in this game does not imply any endorsement by NASA.

The contents of the game are covered by the *Anti-Capitalist Attribution Cooperative License*, written by [Takuma Okada](#) which [you can read here](#).

This game is primarily an homage 1970s-era space science and science fiction.

Battlestar Galactica in its original, 1978 form is a key inspiration, as well as the later 2004-2009 remake. Other influences include the obvious *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, but also *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Space: 1999*, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*.

Around 1975-1977, as a young nerd girl growing in California, I was fascinated by astronomy and the *science-based* vision of a future in space portrayed in NASA's concept art - some of which appears in **PIONEERS!** - that is, until a certain *space opera* movie came out in the summer of 1977.