Welcome to Star Commander

Star Commander (StarCom) is a card game of exploration, colonization, commerce, and conflict. In a single round of StarCom, you are fighting against other would-be empires vying for control of star systems, in order to grow your own influence across the galaxy.

What do you need to play?

Everything you need comes with the game - three Domain decks of 30 cards each, one System deck of 25 cards, and a number of cards to represent different ships and stations. Credit tokens and development tokens are also included.

How to Win

The goal of Star Commander is to dominate known space. To achieve that, you must conquer the homeworld of each opponent. When your homeworld is no longer under your control, you lose. When no other players remain, you win!

Play Area

Directly in front of the player is the Technology Row, where researched technologies will go. In the center of the game area, place nine (or sixteen, or twenty-five) face-down System cards, placed into a grid. Each player sits at one of the corners of this grid. Systems are considered adjacent on the diagonal lines of the grid only. Place the System deck and the three Domain decks to the side of the board.

Card Types

There are five card types in the game. Throughout play, you will be interacting with each of these at some point, so it's good to familiarize yourself with them.

Ship

There are four ship types - Fighter, Small, Medium, and Large. Each has a cost, attack, and hit points. Some ships have other abilities written on them. Ships are the only cards that can move between systems. Ships are built at your Homeworld, and are placed on the side of the system card closest to you. Ships are placed on the board with their text facing their controller. All ships (but Fighters) can jump 1 system per turn, while Fighters cannot jump unless otherwise stated (if a card gives the ability to jump, or to jump an additional time, then fighters can perform that action).

Station

Stations act just like ships, but cannot move between systems.

System

Systems are the backbone of your empire. They provide resources to build ships and play other cards. The text of a System should be facing its controller. Systems also have a domain (see Domains).

Technology

Technology cards allow for additional, long-lasting abilities. Technology cards are placed in the Technology row closest to the player.

Command

Commands are cards that affect gameplay, then go to the discard pile. You play them from your hand onto the board, then move them to the discard pile.

Domains

Each card in the game (besides the core ships and stations) is part of a Domain. There are three domains - Industry, Politics, and Science. These domains reflect the focus of your nation. As you play, you will draw cards from the three domain decks to add to your hand. This will shape the way that you play.

Industry

Industry is primarily focused on getting the most out of your resources. Industry cards provide additional combat options, as well as work to keep your ships operational. Industry also focuses on generating more credits.

Politics

Politics focuses on defensive play, providing tools for building a strong support network for your systems. It relies on building defensive stations and fighters to secure its holdings. Politics cards also help manipulate the flow of the game in ways not related to combat.

Science

Science is all about researching new technologies. Science cards typically will help defend your ships from attacks, or help you move your ships into position faster.

How to Play

Starting the Game

- Shuffle the domain decks and the system deck.
- Place system cards face down on the board (3x3, 4x4, or 5x5 grid is recommended). Place a Homeworld System in the starting system for each player, with a development token on it for that player.
- Each player is given 3 credits.
- Put a Scout into play in each player's starting system under their control.
- Choose who goes first, by some random method.

Game Phases

- Ready Phase (skip on first turn)
  - Gain credits
  - Roll Domain Die
  - Perform Start of Turn actions
- Command Phase
  - Move Ships
  - Explore
  - Build ships/stations
  - Repair/Scrap
  - Trade
  - Develop
- Combat Phase
  - Initiate Combat
  - Assign Damage
  - Retreat
- End Phase
  - Conquest
  - Cleanup

Ready Phase

Do these in order.

Gain Credits

Gain credits as shown on your cards. Most resources come from Systems, but may also come from other cards you control. Gain 1 credit for each development you control in systems that are not under siege (see Siege).

Draw a card

Draw a card for one of the domains you control.

Perform Start of Turn Actions

Perform any actions on cards you control that take place at the start of the turn.

Command Phase

Do these in any order

Move Ships

Ships that you have controlled since the start of your turn have one movement action. You may move them (called jumping) to another adjacent system. Ship may only jump once per turn unless otherwise stated (except Fighters).

Explore

Whenever a ship enters a system with a face down System card, you may flip it over. This is called Exploring. Some systems have effects when they are explored, which are to be done before play continues and cannot be responded to.

Build Ships/Stations

You may build any ships or stations that you can afford. Stations can be built in any system you control, while ships can only be constructed in your home system. There are some restrictions on when you can build ships or stations:

- You can only build a number of stations in a system equal to its development level (the number of development counters on it). If a system only has one development counter, it can only have one station.
- You cannot build a ship or station in a contested system (see Contested System) or a system that is under siege (see Siege).

Repair/Scrap

You may pay 2 credits to repair 1 hit point on a ship or station you control. You may also destroy a ship you control and gain credits equal to half its cost, rounded down (but no less than 1). These actions can only take place in uncontested systems (see Contested System).

Play Commands

You may play Commands by revealing the card and performing the action on the card. Other players may respond with their own abilities or Commands (see Responses). Discard the card afterward.

Trade

You may do any of the following:

- Pay 3 credits to draw a card. If you already have eight cards in hand, you must discard one first.
- Discard two cards, then gain three credits.

You may also trade with players. These trades may include credits, cards in your hand or in play, systems or ships you control, or favors.

If you trade a system to a player, remove all of your development counters and replace them with an equal number of that player's development counters.

Develop

You may build developments on systems. If you control a ship in an uncontrolled system, you may pay 1 credit to build a development. This gives you control of the system. You may build additional developments by paying the number of developments plus 1. (In order to go from 1 development to 2, you must pay 2 credits).

Combat Phase

Initiate Combat

Combat takes place when two or more players have ships and/or stations in the same system. Actively engaging in combat (assigning and dealing damage) is not mandatory; you may decline to have your ships attack any other ships if you so choose. Combat is resolved one system at a time, with the order chosen by the active player.

Assign Damage

The active player assigns all damage being dealt by ships they control. Not all ships must declare targets. Going clockwise, each other player involved in combat assigns all damage being dealt by ships they control.

Apply Damage

Damage is resolved. All assigned damage is dealt to assigned targets.

Retreat

Starting with the active player and going clockwise, any ships that have not moved may now move into another friendly or empty system. This is referred to as retreating.

Before each of these steps, starting with the active player and going clockwise, each player may play any commands or abilities they choose. Note that after a ship has assigned its combat damage, that damage will be dealt to the chosen target regardless of whether the ship was destroyed before the damage resolution step.

End Phase

Conquest

For any system under siege (see Siege), remove development counters from it equal to the number of non-Fighter ships the active player controls in that system. When the last development counter is removed, the active player has conquered the system, and places one development counter on the system.

Cleanup

End of turn effects end. All ships with more damage than HP are destroyed. If any player's Homeworld has been captured, they lose. Remove all ships and counters they control from the board.

Additional Rules

Hand Limit

You may only have up to eight cards in your hand at a time. If you attempt to draw a card with eight cards already in your hand, you must discard one first. If an action puts a card into your hand, you must also first discard a card. At no time should you have more than eight cards in hand.

Turn Order

If there are more than two players in a game, players will take turns in a clockwise order. The same applies for performing any actions, such as playing Commands or activating abilities (see Responses).

Targeting

Ships and stations can only target in their current system. If an ability on a card says that a ship or station you control does something to another ship, this same rule applies. Any card that refers to "target ship or station" (or similar) may perform its action in any system.

Responses

Whenever, during either the Command or Combat Phases, a player plays a card or uses an ability, it can be responded to. In each case, the active player chooses whether to use another card or ability, then each other player may choose, going clockwise from the active player. When all players pass, the sequence of cards and abilities is resolved. These actions are resolved in "last on, first off" order.

Contested System

A contested system is a system which is controlled by a player where combat has occurred since their last turn. Ships and stations cannot be built in contested systems, and existing ships cannot be repaired or scrapped (unless otherwise stated).

Siege

A system is considered under siege when an opponent has non-Fighter ships in that system, and the controlling player has no ships or stations with attack values. Systems that are under siege do not generate credits from developments, and players cannot build ships or stations in systems that are under siege.

Fighters

Fighters are small, single-occupant ships that are unable to jump or support themselves. You may only control a number of fighters equal to your total development count, and you may only have a number of fighters in a system equal to its development level. Fighters are unable to participate in a siege (see Siege). Treat fighters as having a jump distance of 0. If a card says that a ship may perform a jump outside of its normal ability, that card applies to fighters as well (for example, Jump Nexus or Enhanced Jump Drive).

If a fighter is abandoned (only fighters remain in a system you do not control) at the start of your turn, and remains abandoned at the end of your turn, it is destroyed.