

The Complete Elite Dangerous Background Simulation Guide

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If there are mistakes, they are mine, and mine alone. It is said “write something incorrect if you want the correct answer.” I’m not saying I deliberately added mistakes, but if you spot a mistake or an improvement, please email me (vanderaj@gmail.com) or come to the SINC Discord (<https://discord.gg/XgQNYjUyTN>) and discuss it with us. You can get the latest version of this file from SINC Science -

<https://sinc.science/guides/sinc/The%20Complete%20BGS%20Guide%202024.pdf>

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first all-new background simulation (BGS) guide in quite some time, one that covers modern crime and punishment, fleet carriers, and, of course, Odyssey. This guide will be updated once PowerPlay 2.0 comes out. This guide is for all skill levels – from folks wanting to get into BGS, to BGS Coordinators running huge factions.

You can get going with the background simulation in the loaner Sidewinder or default flight suit. All you need to do is complete some missions, do a bit of pew pew, fit a fuel scoop and go exploring, or add some cargo racks and do some trade. There are other actions that you can take as well, but these are the primary four game loops that anyone can do. You don't need to be Elite ranked. You don't need fancy ships or suits. Anyone can get into BGS, including you!

Who is this guide for?

This guide is, first and foremost, for those who are just starting to get into BGS and those who are highly experienced BGS coordinators - to help them understand BGS better and be more efficient. This guide is designed to allow you to be highly effective at manipulating the BGS for fun and profit.

Much of the guidance in the first part will not be new or surprising to experienced BGS Coordinators, but I hope the reference section can help them produce better BGS requests that use their team's time more effectively.

BGS is not a second job

BGS can be all-consuming. BGS is not a second job; don't let it get in the way of your family, life, or real job. If you feel obligated to do BGS every day or start to feel burned out, pull back and do something else in the game. Or take a break from the game. If you want to talk about it, come to SINC's Discord and chat about it. We've all been there.

Science First - Data and Experiment Driven

Where data exists or we've tested a recommended approach, we use that data or experiments to support our recommendations. Much of the best missions, state effects, and actions come from the excellent Colonia Census (<https://cdb.sotl.org.uk/>) by Commander Ian Doncaster.

This guide relies on almost everything other than the older BGS Guides. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. BGS has changed a great deal since the old BGS Guides were written. This guide builds upon the Colonia Census, the game, testing, and the ED BGS hive mind.

We will let you know where we haven't tested a recommendation. If you come up with a better experiment or results, please let me know. There is nothing worse than promulgating out-of-date information or sub-optimal tactics or strategies.

Opinionated

This guide has Opinions™ and does not shy away from controversial topics, such as negative actions like clean killing. Some factions don't do negative actions, but BGS allows for positive and negative actions, so this guide documents them without judgment.

Everything in BGS can be done in multiple ways, some more effective than others. This guide is not just a reference; it also suggests various tactics and strategies. I hope this guide inspires folks to research and develop new BGS tactics and strategies, especially as PowerPlay 2.0 comes into life and disrupts the moribund state of BGS.

Not every BGS Coordinator will agree with this guide's opinions, which is perfectly fine. If you think you know better than what you read here or have a better tactic or strategy, please let me know, and I'll test it out and update this guide.

The intersection between BGS and PowerPlay

Often, BGS coordinators consider PowerPlay 1.0 to be irrelevant to BGS. This is not the case. By not participating in PowerPlay, you are eliminating your squadron's role-play opportunities, getting a chance to meet and kill new Commanders, or obtaining various bonuses for your exploited and controlled systems.

PowerPlay 1.0 has triggers that rely upon favorable BGS government types, so the most active BGS squadrons in the game are the Powers. They often flip systems to create a majority favorable government type in a control sphere and manage systems with or without the controlling faction's consent. The best way to avoid acrimonious relations is to reach out with diplomacy to the various Powers.

Additionally, there are bonuses from PowerPlay exploitation and control. These change how systems work, such as closing (or opening!) black markets, changing what's illegal at markets, increasing production and prices of high market value goods, changing the system's security level, and more. These directly impact BGS.

With PowerPlay 2.0 coming, this guide strongly recommends that squadrons reach out to their nearest Powers – and vice versa - and see how they can cooperate.

Essential Internet Resources

- Inara <https://inara.cz>
- EliteBGS <https://elitebgs.app>
- Jegin Information Network <https://jegin.net/>
- ED BGS Discord <https://discord.gg/PZwERyb>
- Squadron Recruitment Center <https://discord.gg/squadronrecruitmentcenter>
- Colonia Census <https://cdb.sotl.org.uk/>

Colonia Census is a fantastic resource for the Colonia region, but as they tend to have smaller systems, there's a chance that some of their results aren't necessarily applicable to much larger population systems of the bubble. However, the Census is one of the most comprehensive evidence-based BGS sites available today.

Essential Tools

BGS is data-driven under the hood. To help surface this data, please help collect and deliver data to the Elite Dangerous Data Network (EDDN), which all tools used in this guide subscribe to, such as Inara, EliteBGS, ED SM, Jegin, and others. This lets you keep a history (EliteBGS) or view the current situation at a glance (EliteBGS, Jegin, and Inara) in one spot.

To collect BGS data for Elite tools, you should install:

- ED Market Connector - [Releases · EDCD/EDMarketConnector \(github.com\)](#)

Configuring an Inara API key is highly recommended to provide greater detail than the journal alone provides. Details are in the Installation and Setup section of the [EDMC documentation](#).

To help understand what your faction's players have been doing, ask them to record their actions in a paper notebook or text file, or even better, install Aussi's BGS Tally plugin for ED MC and let them set up "Post to Discord."

- Aussi BGS Tally Plugin - [Releases · aussig/BGS-Tally \(github.com\)](#)

The details on how to do this are included in the plugin documentation. The Discord admin for your server will need to let players set up an integration to make this work.

Some terms used throughout the document

- **Super Power** - there are three superpowers – the Empire, the Federation, and the Alliance. And Independents, but they aren't an acknowledged superpower.
- **Power** – there are 11 powers, aligned with the Empire, Federation, Alliance, or Independent
- **Squadron** – a collection of Commanders supporting one or more factions in-game. This guide uses "player group" to mean a faction presence outside the game. Player groups usually support one player minor faction, but some, including Powers, support many factions.
- **Player Minor Faction** (PMF or faction) – in-game representation of a squadron. The game confusingly uses squadrons (as in Squadron Hub) and factions to mean the same thing. This guide uses "faction" to mean the in-game faction, whether a PMF or NPC faction.
- **System**. A populated system that participates in BGS
- **Asset**. A spaceport, planetary port, Odyssey settlement, and more. See below.

WHAT IS BGS?

Elite Dangerous populated systems are governed and brought to life by the BackGround Simulation (BGS). The BGS controls everything from security levels, system states, market prices and supply and demand, shipyard and outfitting availability, faction influence, NPC behavior (particularly terrorist and pirate states), and more. Nearly everything you and all the other Cmdrs do in Elite Dangerous in populated systems affects the BGS.

So why do BGS? Why do Lego? Because it's there and it has been designed to get you involved in all facets of the game. It can be fun to manipulate the background simulation, whether to promote beneficial states for high grade emission farming, flip systems on behalf of your preferred Power or to bring the local sphere of influence to be majority favorable, conquer your local part of the galaxy, run a diplomatic mission, fight with your fellow players, or win a gold medal on the game's political leaderboard – it's entirely up to you. BGS is player driven, and without players, the BGS is just a small set of random movements every day.

BGS is at its heart, a 100% sum game. A system will contain several *factions*. Each faction has an *influence* level, and when all factions' influence is totaled, it will total 100%. Doing positive actions for your faction will necessarily reduce other factions. Hostile Cmdrs doing work for other factions will reduce your faction. Depending on the actions they take, it will affect your faction's *state*. Some states are good, some don't hurt, and others are bad and are best avoided.



BGS encourages Commanders to play all the primary gameplay loops – trade, missions, exploration, and combat, both at a surface level – just by doing the positive version but also in a deeper, more negative way.

BGS is a yin-yang model; the most successful BGS Commanders know when to push up or pull down one or more factions and how to do it the most efficiently. Whilst you are getting into BGS, you should probably concentrate on positive actions first and foremost, or do the actions requested of you by your faction's BGS coordinator but know that there are highly effective negative actions that will open the world of BGS manipulation.



BGS manipulation is the art of promoting and maintaining beneficial states and happiness in your own systems and, when necessary, performing positive or negative actions and states for other factions and systems. In contested areas of the galaxy, it's essential to create negative states in your enemy's systems to make them work harder so they can't attack you so often or to reduce (squench) or misdirect their expansions away from your systems. A busy enemy is distracted and less effective at resisting your plans and expansions. You can do this with some stealth or entirely in the open. It's up to you.

Learning to use your time wisely is the key to successful BGS manipulation, especially if you're in a highly contested part of the galaxy.

Systems

Populated systems (systems from now on) are the fundamental unit for which BGS operates.

Systems have at least one station or planetary port, with more populous systems having larger stations or ports, and more of them. Optionally, systems can have Odyssey settlements, installations, and megaships.

Systems can have up to 8 factions in normal circumstances, each with an influence level. Influence adds up to 100%. We'll talk about influence shortly.

Systems have an overall state, usually the controlling faction's state or expansion, if the controlling faction is in expansion. Secondary factions can affect the global system state, but this is the exception, not the rule. Expansion is a global state, which we will talk about later.

Unpopulated and detention center systems, like HR 1172, do not take part in the BGS.

Factions

There are two types of factions – player minor factions (PMFs, or “factions” from now on) and non-player characters (NPC factions), and an increasingly common “player adopted factions”, where players are looking after defunct PMFs or NPC factions in their area. Mechanically, there is no difference between these, though the greater likelihood of a PMF being deliberately supported can make them appear different in practice.

Every faction has a home system, and they are considered “native” to the system and cannot be retreated. Many NPC factions include the name of their home system in their name, but not all of them. PMFs have a home system – this is where they were initially seeded into the game by Frontier Developments or selected by the Commander starting the faction. They, too, cannot be retreated from that system. If you see a PMF not in control of its home system, the faction is likely defunct or under the control or aegis of another PMF.

Commanders can adopt, boost, or reduce any faction within the game, including NPC factions. However, this guide recommends that Commanders join a squadron and support known PMFs within the game.

You want to be a part of an active community, but sadly, there are many defunct player groups and, therefore, many defunct squadrons. Generally, it's a good idea to make contact with a player group before joining the game squadron, but you can browse squadrons within the game and join them. Depending on the squadron settings in the game, approval might be needed to join the squadron. Once a member, the main difference is that you can now see in-game squadron news (if any) and access squadron chat. Privileged roles are held by the original Commander who started the faction and their delegated Commanders (if any).

Reputation

Faction reputation is a measure of your trustworthiness to the faction. Factions will offer you more types of missions and higher rewards as you progress from neutral to allied. Being allied is not the same as being pledged to a faction. Typically, you will be allied with your supported faction, but

sometimes, you must take adverse actions against your faction to manage the BGS properly, which will temporarily harm your reputation.

There's also superpower reputation, which you can earn by completing missions and activities for factions of that superpower. When you unlock the Federal Corvette or the Imperial Cutter, you will be increasing your reputation with the Federation or Empire respectively. You can also increase your reputation with the Alliance, but as there are no ships behind an Alliance rank wall, this is mostly the preserve of Alliance PowerPlay Cmdrs. You can see your reputation with the superpowers on the right hand panel on the second tab down under Status.

You can also lose your reputation and end up unfriendly or hostile. Being hostile to a faction prevents you from getting missions from the faction and stops you (easily) landing at a faction's stations, settlements, and ports. If you're in hostile status, you will recover a little bit of reputation daily until you're unfriendly.

Influence

Influence is how influential a faction is within a system. Nearly everything you do in a system will affect all the factions' influence levels. The most common objective of manipulating BGS is to get your faction on top of all the other factions, keep them there, and then repeat that in as many systems as you can control.

Influence under 2.5% will cause a non-native faction to enter the retreat state, potentially leaving a system if no action is taken. Influence above 75% will cause a faction to enter the expansion state and potentially expand to a nearby system.

You can roleplay the spoiler, reducing the influence of opposing factions and "helping" them not to expand in your direction. This means keeping visibility on their systems' influence and guessing what they're up to. Similarly, they might be in your systems, "helping" manage your systems to suit themselves.

A faction will bump into other factions with similar influence levels. If one or both factions have assets, a conflict will result, and the game will lock the two factions together. Conflicts are either wars or elections, depending on their government type. A faction without any assets can move around other factions that don't have assets without causing an influence lock or conflict. However, the controlling faction will always own at least the controlling asset. Thus, a convergence in influence between the controlling faction and another faction always results in a conflict for control of the system. This is best avoided by boosting the controlling faction and reducing the predatory faction. We will talk about conflict tactics in more detail later – both from a controlling faction's point of view and from a predatory faction's point of view, which wants to take over a system.

The controlling faction usually has the most influence, but there are circumstances where this is not the case, such as during a coup or a conflict for control.

Assets – Stations and more

Asset ownership. Factions can own large orbital space stations, medium outposts, Odyssey settlements, planetary ports (collectively "stations" or "assets"), installations, and mega-ships. Not

every asset in a system will be owned by the controlling faction, and in fact, this is rare outside of single-asset systems. Not every faction will own an asset.

Controlling asset. The controlling faction – usually the faction with the highest system influence – will own the controlling asset. The controlling asset is usually – but not always – the closest and largest spaceport to the main A star. Without spaceports, the first planetary port will be the controlling asset. In some systems, notably Delphi, the controlling asset is NOT the first large spaceport. Until you initiate a conflict to control a system, there is no way of telling which asset is the controlling asset.

Controlling faction. A station's controlling (owning) faction gets influence from trade, universal cartographics (if available), combat bonds, and missions. Non-controlling factions can only offer missions and combat bounties as influence levers.

Installations can either be in space or on the ground. They are owned by a faction. You can tell who owns an installation by determining which faction provides the system authority ships. This is the installation's owner, and doing positive or negative actions at the installation, such as completing a scenario or attacking skimmers, will affect the installation's owner.

Non-Dockable Megaships move systems and are owned by the system controllers. These megaships provide scenarios – immediate missions – which you can complete to boost the controlling faction, or deliberately fail to reduce the controlling faction. You can also attack the megaship by hacking the comms array or stealing the cargo with hatch breaker limpets. Often, there is loose cargo around the megaship. If it says “Legal salvage,” you can collect it without hurting the controlling faction, or if it says “Illegal salvage”, collecting it will incur a small fine and reduce the controlling faction's security slider. Illegal salvage is considered stolen, and you can sell it to black markets.

Dockable megaships. Some player-owned megaships exist, such as SINC's Dionysus in HIP 17044 – which does not move and acts like a regular system station, or Cannon's The Gnosis – which does move but doesn't act like a regular system station – it doesn't introduce Cannon's faction to an unpopulated system. Whichever faction provides the system authority ships protecting the megaship is the owner for BGS purposes. Dockable megaships never have scenarios.

System states

System states, such as boom, bust, expansion, lockdown, or civil liberty, govern how BGS reacts to various inputs and provides bonuses, modifiers, or penalties. One of the significant outcomes of many states is modifiers for trade. Some positive states nearly double prices, demand, and supply, and negative states reduce prices and demand. For example, trade missions are more effective in a boom and allow Commanders to make a decent profit.

All factions can generate unidentified signal sources (USS's), which inherit the state of the faction. If you are hunting high-grade emissions for factions in a boom state, you should pay attention to the faction and the state of the USS before dropping in.

There are three main types of system state:

- Local state, generally the controlling faction's state is the system state, but it can be a secondary faction's state in some circumstances
- Global state, an older state type, of which expansion is the last remaining global state
- AX states, a newer system state type, of alert, Alert, Invasion, Control, and Recovery

There are many states – please review the reference section on their effects, how long they last, how to get into them, and how to get out of them.

Sliders

The faction sliders are the two major visible aspects of a faction's state in Elite Dangerous. These can be viewed on the right-hand panel under status. The position of the sliders determines the faction state. You can do positive actions to improve the sliders and the states, which come with various bonuses and modifiers. You can do negative actions to bring down the sliders and get a faction into a negative state, which can harm the faction... or help it. Like in the later stages of playing Monopoly, being sent to jail and staying there helps win the game because you don't land on other players' properties. Similarly, a difficult state like lockdown can slow down or stop attacks against a system, so it might be in the best interest of a faction to enter lockdown.

In the absence of any action, both sliders will gradually move back towards the center point.

Economy

The economy slider is a measure of the economic health of the faction. The higher the slider, the more beneficial trade and exploration are; the lower it is, the more work you'll need to do to bring the faction out of that state.

Security

The security slider represents a faction's ability to maintain law and order in a system. The levers for the security slider are violence, more violence, and ultra violence. Dropping combat bounties and doing combat-related missions increases the security slider; clean kills and illegal missions that target the security slider (like kill skimmers, etc) will lower the security slider.

Anarchy factions always have their security slider locked to the center and, therefore, cannot experience Civil Liberty, Civil Unrest, or Lockdown states.

System security levels

Each system has a security level, which is roughly the number of system authority ships within a system.

Low. Low security systems have the fewest system authority ships, you are unlikely to be interdicted by the system authority ships, system authority ships take additional time and respond very half-heartedly to crimes, there is a chance there will be a compromised navigation beacon, and often you'll find interstellar factors at stations, which is a great place to get rid of unwanted bounties and fines. There are more NPC pirates in low security systems.

Medium. There are increasing numbers of system authority ships present around the system and within ports, settlements and installations. Interdictions may happen. There is a moderate amount of NPC pirates, but the response by system authorities if you have report crimes on should be enough to see them off.

High. In High security systems, you will often be interdicted by the system authority ships for scans for illegal goods (you'll get a fine if you stick around for the scan to finish), the system authority ships will respond with more and better equipped ships to crimes, and there's more chances you'll be scanned when smuggling in illegal goods at stations. Many high security systems are heavily involved in trade, so strangely enough, there will be more pirates in high security systems as a result, but if you have "Report crimes against me" turned on, response will be relatively swift and useful if you're in a defenseless trade ship.

Daily tick

Every day, there is a "tick." This tick spreads throughout the galaxy at different times and has multiple phases, so it is possible to see the tick changing the state of a system a little at a time. The three known phases are:

- **Conflict resolution** – conflict efforts are tallied, and winning days are awarded to factions who have won the most conflict zones and handed in the most combat bonds or handed in the most election missions and economic influence. If a conflict is concluded, the spoils are distributed to the winning faction and subtracted from the losing faction.
- **State resolution** – certain states are introduced or concluded, sometimes with "taxes" applied to the applicable faction, such as the expansion tax of around 15% being subtracted at the expansion conclusion. This phase is when retreats are processed; there is no point in distributing influence on a faction that is being removed, and their influence must be distributed to all the other factions.
- **Effort distribution** – Commander activity is applied and distributed amongst the remaining factions.

There is no single tick time, and the tick time for System A *will* be different from System B. If you wait for the tick to come through, you might be waiting for a while. If you're worried about handing in a mission or bonds in time to make a difference to this tick, hand it in now.

Station News is the first location with the most accurate information about the tick's results. You must be docked in a station in the system to find out early. The remaining locations, such as the journal, galactic map, squadron hub, and right-hand panel, will have the results within one to 12 hours of the tick time. There is no rhyme or reason as to why this is. It just is.

The best advice is to play when you can and let the dominos fall where they will. You may occasionally waste effort, such as handing in or abandoning completed missions for a retreated faction or holding onto bonds for a war that has finished, but having too much done is better than not enough.

Weekly server maintenance tick

Once a week, at 0700 UTC every Thursday, the game servers are brought offline, and maintenance processed. This is when PowerPlay 1.0's weekly tick is processed. Odyssey stations are restocked with fresh suits and weapons. The weekly server tick has no effect on the BGS daily tick and the system influence, the two ticks are two separate things.

JOINING A SQUADRON AND GETTING INTO BGS

Getting started with BGS is easy. There is a low barrier to entry. You can do BGS on foot or in any ship. You can do BGS with just the game, no tools, and without joining a player group, but you'll get a lot more out of the BGS if you join a player group, get into the ED BGS community, find mentors, start asking questions, and use tools to maximize your effectiveness.

You've almost certainly been doing BGS but didn't realize it – completing missions, handing in combat bounties, dropping exploration data, fighting wars, and making trade (such as mining or deliberate trade loops) all affect the BGS. This guide is to help you be highly effective at boosting (or reducing) a faction without overworking yourself.

The following steps document what many factions will want you to do, but practically, you can skip ahead to Step 4 and just start doing BGS. The best bet is to find a squadron and find out what they want you to do. Most will want you to have a verified Inara profile, join their squadron in game and on Inara, and run sufficient tools to help them understand what you've been doing.

Step 1 – Join a Squadron

If you're just getting started with BGS, it cannot be stressed highly enough to join an active player group, whether a squadron in the area you're interested in, the New Pilots Initiative if you're a newbie, or a Power, who are some of the largest and busiest BGS operations in the game. Most player groups will have a squadron page on Inara that covers at least one faction in-game. There are hundreds of active player groups, all looking for BGS operatives, who are happy to train and mentor you in the ways of BGS in return for influence.

Either:

- **For newbies - join the New Pilots Initiative.** The NEWP folks will show you the ropes and have an active BGS. NEWP is a great choice for new Commanders learning the game and BGS. <https://discord.com/invite/newp>
- **For intermediate Commanders - find a squadron at the Squadron Recruitment Center.** So many factions are desperate for BGS operatives – you can rise rapidly in many squadrons. <https://discord.gg/squadronrecruitmentcenter>
- **For advanced Commanders - join a Power and help them with their BGS efforts.** Powers are the most active BGS player groups, typically with more than 500 systems and heavy diplomacy requirements. Most Powers have a BGS faction of their own or have allies you can join. See the table in the references section on page 60 to find your nearest Power Discord.
- **Form a new squadron (might not be possible).** See Forming a squadron on page 19 for all the details of how to create your own squadron.

Step 2 – Secure Your Inara Profile

Nearly all player groups will require a verified Inara profile to join their squadron on Inara or in-game to avoid “fifth column” (enemy infiltration). If you already have an Inara profile, that is great; let's configure it correctly.

- **Join Inara.** Go to <https://inara.cz> click “Sign In”, and then “Create your account!”
- **Sign in.**
- **Set account privacy.** Go to Commander > Commander Settings > Privacy Settings and change, at the very least, “Commander’s Flight Log,” “Commander’s missions log,” “Commander’s combat log,” and “Commander’s location” to “Squadron members.” If you’re not yet a squadron member, you might need to do this after you join the squadron. Nearly all squadrons require Inara privacy.
- **Link to your Frontier account.** Go to Commander > Commander Settings and link your Frontier account. Once done, it will say, “Your game account is linked and verified.”
- **Import your Frontier data.** Go to Commander > Overview > Import game data.

Step 3 – Get Toolled Up

BGS is driven by Commander activity, with a small dose of BGS randomness (RNG) to keep things interesting. Although you can play without any tools, you are hobbling your ability to compete. You will work harder than Commanders using tools and data to direct their activity and be less effective.

- **Publish your activity.** Install a tool like ED Market Connector to report your activity to all the tools like Inara, EliteBGS, and Jegin.
- **Generate an API key for ED Market Connector.** Go to Commander > Commander Settings > API Settings. Generate a new API key. Copy the key to your clipboard.
- **Configure ED Market Connector Inara API Key.** Paste the API key into ED Market Connector in File > Settings > Inara > API key. Click the Inara credentials link to log in to Inara, and then click OK. Click Update, and your location should be updated in Inara.
- **Track your activity.** Use a paper notebook, text file, or a tracking tool like Aussi’s BGS Tally to help you track your activity. Nearly all player groups require participating Commanders to report their activity.

Some player groups are anti-tool or are trying to do something hush-hush and require you not to use tools while completing specific goals. Collaborate with your player group to help you (and them) be more effective by using tools most of the time while living within no-tool restrictions during certain operations. If your player group is completely anti-tool, it might be best to find another player group.

Step 4 – Get into BGS

Most squadrons have a regularly published BGS request. Review the request, ask a few questions on your squadron’s Discord on how best to do it, and then start doing it. At the end of your play session, let them know what you’ve done. Most squadrons will have a private channel for this to obscure the activity from prying eyes.

If there’s no recent BGS request, have a look at the squadron’s Inara system overview page, and find the lowest controlled system. With few exceptions, it’s almost impossible to go wrong by boosting the lowest influence system. Have a look at the system state(s) and compare that to the states in the reference section so you know what sort of actions you can do that make the most sense and the best use of your time. For example, in lockdown, you can only drop combat bounties, or in boom, trade and exploration data are the most effective. Look at the population size of the system.

If it's small (less than about a million population), a little activity will go a long way, so don't overdo it. Do the actions you want to do, wait for the tick to pass, and then look at the results.

Either way, congrats, you've just done your first BGS boost! Well done. There's a heap more to BGS than this, but for the most part, working on systems in trouble and boosting the lowest influence systems is the bread and butter of most squadrons' BGS efforts.

Some squadrons require their BGS operatives to do a minimum amount of weekly work to stay within their BGS group. Playing a game or doing BGS should never be a second job. You should learn what you can and move on if the requirements are too onerous. If you're a squadron leader, this guide recommends not mandating minimum activity levels, but it's up to you.

Open, Private Group, or Solo?

Most player groups require their BGS operatives to work in open mode, and this guide recommends that you do, too. Playing in open provides opportunities for Commander interaction, including PvP, and opportunities to counter or assist BGS activities organically.

However, play the game the way you want, but know that many in the BGS community consider playing in PG or solo against the ethos of fair play, which may affect diplomatic relations.

Forming a squadron

Frontier Developments has not been processing in-game squadron requests for a while now. They might resume processing squadron requests after the Thargoid war is over, but we simply don't know when it will resume.

If you want to create a new squadron, go to the right-hand panel in the game, Squadrons (this is the Squadron Hub), Squadron Management, and Create a Squadron. It will cost you 10,000,000 credits.

Please take the time to choose your government type, superpower, and power alignment carefully.

If you are going to be creating a squadron in 2024, you will want to align yourself with a Power, because almost certainly, you will be placed within a Power's sphere of influence. If you remain entirely independent, you miss out on a great deal of prebuilt active community.

PowerPlay Control 1.0 Table

Most Powers strongly prefer to have favorable government types, so if you can, choose one of the "strong" government types if you plan on pledging to a specific Power and your planned systems are within their sphere of influence. If your preferred government type is neither weak nor strong, it's neutral, and although you won't be helping your preferred Power, you won't necessarily harm them as long as they remain with a majority favorable government type within the controlling sphere of influence. If your preferred government type is "weak" or unfavorable, you will actively harm your Power – pledged or not, and things will not go well for you.

Power	Weak (or unfavorable)	Strong (or preferred)	Neutral
Aisling Duval	Feudal Prison Colony Theocracy	Communist Cooperative Confederacy	Corporate Democracy Patronage Dictatorship
Archon Delaine	Feudal Prison Colony Theocracy	Confederacy Cooperative Communist	Corporate Democracy Patronage Dictatorship
Arisa Lavigny-Duval	Dictatorship	Feudal Patronage	Corporate Cooperative Confederacy Democracy
Denton Patreus	Dictatorship	Feudal Patronage	Corporate Democracy Communism Anarchy
Edmond Mahon	Communist Cooperative Feudal Patronage	Corporate	Democracy Confederacy Dictatorship
Felicia Winters	Communist Cooperative Feudal Patronage	Corporate	Democracy Theocracy Confederacy Dictatorship
Li Yong-Rui	Communist Cooperative Feudal Patronage	Corporate	Democracy Anarchy Dictatorship
Pranav Antal	Democracy	Feudal Dictatorship Communist Cooperative	Corporate Confederacy Patronage
Yuri Grom	Democracy	Feudal Dictatorship Communist Cooperative	Corporate Confederacy Anarchy Patronage
Zachary Hudson	Dictatorship	Feudal Patronage	Democracy Corporate Confederacy Cooperative Communism Theocracy

Power	Weak (or unfavorable)	Strong (or preferred)	Neutral
Zemina Torval	Democracy	Feudal Dictatorship Communist Cooperative	Corporate Cooperative Confederacy Feudal Anarchy Patronage

Table of PowerPlay 1.0 Control Fortification Bonus Considerations

Powers must have mostly favorable government types within a sphere of influence from their control systems to earn a fortification bonus. They will flip exploited systems to a different controlling faction that best suits their needs, so if you decide to pledge your faction to a Power and you're an unfavorable government type, you will end up being a drag on their sphere of influence around their control systems. This will either mean you never end up controlling many systems, or you will be at war with your pledged power.

If in doubt, work with your preferred Power before selecting your in-game faction, particularly the start location, superpower alignment, government type, and expansion plans. This will get you off to a great start with your preferred Power. A list of Power Discords is in the Reference section.

Build a BGS ship (or two)

The great thing about BGS is that you don't need a highly engineered ship to participate, nor many ships. It's possible to do BGS by using Apex taxis for on-foot missions.

All these builds use the new SCO drives, because there is no downside to them. There's an unengineered build, which has generally a lower range and less capability, and a fully engineered build for those with the patience and materials to make an end game build.

Mission and Generalist BGS Ship

When doing BGS or missions, you often need a "bubble taxi" – a ship that can get around and dock anywhere. The following suggested builds are good at getting around but not as an offensive ship that can take on any pirate.

Role	Unengineered	Engineered
Cobra Mk 3	Cobra Mk 3 (33.5 ly)	Cobra Mk 3 (47.3 ly)
Dolphin	Dolphin (25.7 ly)	Dolphin (53.2 ly)
Asp X Explorer	Asp X (30.2 ly)	Asp X (54.4 ly)
Python (for local cargo runs)	Python (22 ly, 280 cargo)	Python (42.5 ly, 272 cargo)

Trade Ship

Trade is an important element of boosting factions – or reducing them. The following builds are useful for smuggling (because the Dolphin is a very cold running ship), a Python that can do the long-haul medium pad trade missions, and finally a Type 9 and offensive Cutter for local trade loops.

Role	Unengineered	Engineered
Smuggling Dolphin	Dolphin (80 cargo, 19% heat)	Dolphin (80 cargo, 16% heat)
Long Range Python	Python (252 cargo, 19 ly)	Python (236 cargo, 41 ly)
Defenseless Type 9	Type 9 (756 cargo, 13.4 ly)	Type 9 (740 cargo, 31.4 ly)
Offensive Cutter	Cutter (728 cargo, 15.48 ly)	Cutter (712 cargo, 34.3 ly)

Exploration Ship

Exploration is one of the only buckets that cannot be countered by negative actions, so in highly contested systems, make sure you're doing some roads to riches or otherwise dropping exploration data if you control a station. Please note that the 80 ly Anaconda is probably the worst exploration ship in the game, but it can get you places fast. It's difficult to land, slow to turn in normal space and super cruise. The other choices are just better, especially for near-bubble or near-Colonia explorers doing roads to riches.

Role	Unengineered	Engineered
Dolphin	Dolphin (33.3 ly)	Dolphin (63.2 ly)
Asp X	Asp X (36.9 ly)	Asp X (70.5 ly)
Krait Phantom	Krait Phantom (33.5 ly)	Krait Phantom (70.7 ly)
Anaconda	Anaconda (40 ly)	Anaconda (80.6 ly)

Combat Ship

Combat is an essential element to managing the security slider. Not shown here, but very popular in the PvE and PvP community are the Fer-De-Lance, Krait Mk 2, and to a lesser extent, the Krait Phantom. There are great builds available on Reddit r/EliteDangerous and similar sub-Reddits. These builds use frag cannons, which can be a little difficult to land shots.

Note: As of writing (June 2024), the Python MK II is only available for purchase via the Arx Store but will be available for credits within the game after August 7, 2024.

Role	Unengineered	Engineered
Vulture	Vulture (235.7 DPS)	Vulture (341.8 DPS)
Chieftain	Chieftain (337.82 DPS) w/KWS	Chieftain (550.98 DPS) w/KWS
Python MK II	Python Mk II (554 DPS)	Python Mk II (829 DPS)
Corvette	Corvette (678 DPS) w/KWS	Corvette (1036 DPS) w/KWS

Build your own ship

These are just some possibilities. If you are interested in ship building and theory crafting, head on over to r/EliteOutfitters and search for your ship name or ask questions about your build.

[EliteOutfitters \(reddit.com\)](#)

MANIPULATING THE BACKGROUND SIMULATION

BGS mastery is about knowledge, which is why this guide exists. Frontier Developments designed BGS such that a new Commander in a loaner Sidewinder or basic flight suit can affect BGS if they know what they are doing. You don't need (although it is helpful) end-game engineered ships. You don't need to be Elite ranked. You need knowledge.

Sadly, FDev deliberately doesn't document the inner workings of BGS, so much of the knowledge about BGS is through observations, trial and error, testing hypotheses, and pure guesswork.

Work smarter, not harder.

For example, it might sound simple to drop 100 mCr of combat bounties on a system, sell 100 mCr of gold in trade profits, or do 100 influence in missions in a day. It will work. However, there are diminishing returns on efforts to allow smaller efforts by individual Commanders to be as valuable as tremendous contributions. This is a deliberate BGS design choice. So, let's learn about the bucket trigger model and how to use that knowledge to your advantage.

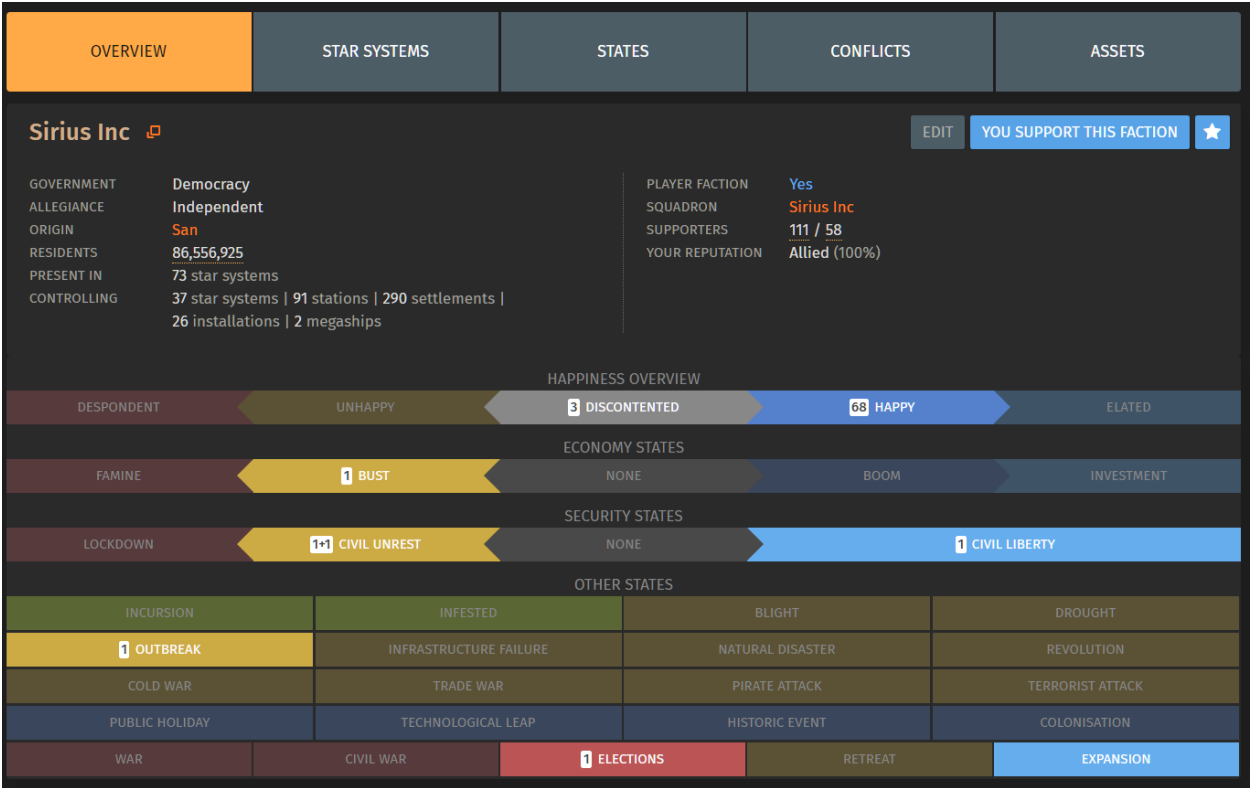
Maintenance

BGS maintenance can be done with a small number of players, primarily to keep the BGS stable, avoiding retreats of uncontrolled systems, topping off low influence systems to avoid conflicts for control, and if necessary, reducing high influence systems to avoid unnecessary expansion.

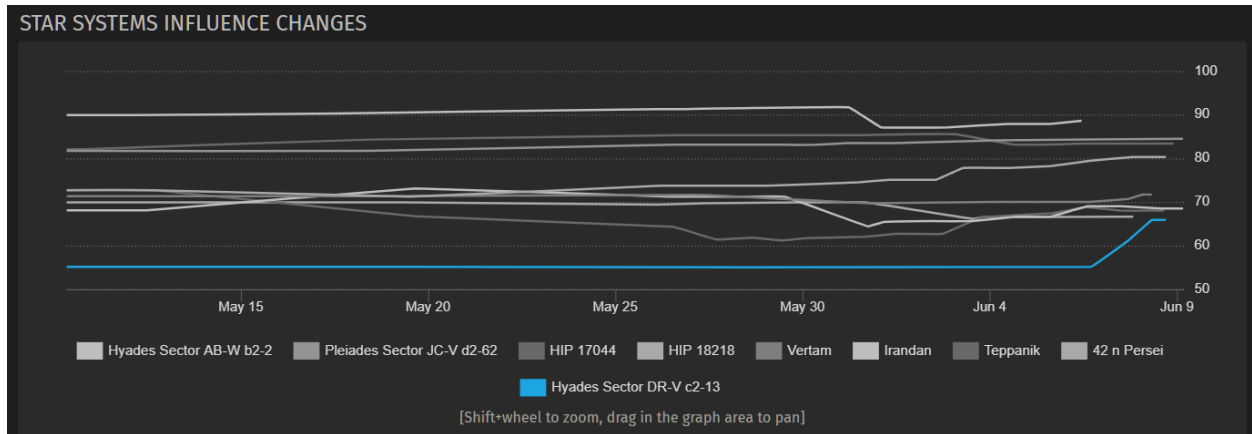
Daily scan

The daily scan is a combination of using Inara.cz's squadron pages, and the in-game squadron hub, because Inara may not necessarily be up to date on influence levels.

Inara – go to Squadron > Overview > click on your minor faction. It will show a summary page like this:



And then followed by a very helpful list of “fast movers”, a list of systems that have the largest swings. A swing of 1%-3% per day is normal background activity, and can probably be ignored, but the graph will show if it’s been consistent over a few days, and thus worth doing something about.



It’s worth sorting the trend column to show the biggest changes, and checking to see if there’s a conflict brewing, or some form of adversarial action occurring in the system, such as a new faction trying to take over the system. This can help you decide on what to work on during this tick.

STAR SYSTEM	INF	TREND	UPDATED
San	61.1%	-17.2%	3 days ago
Ngalia	61.2%	-6.5%	4 days ago
HIP 16813	64.8%	-6.0%	2 days ago
BD+48 738	23.6%	-5.9%	2 hours ago
Ch'ortamayé	45.5%	-4.3%	11 hours ago
Matuveltan	6.5%	-4.3%	22 hours ago
42 n Persei	66.6%	-3.3%	1 day ago
Hyades Sector AB-W b2-2	88.6%	-3.1%	2 days ago
Hyades Sector DR-V c2-23	16.6%	-3.0%	15 minutes ago
Pleiades Sector KC-V c2-4	13.9%	-2.6%	23 hours ago
Pyemma	57.2%	-2.4%	14 hours ago
Chaimal	15.0%	-2.3%	15 hours ago
HIP 17044	83.4%	-2.1%	6 hours ago
Pangkomo	58.3%	-1.2%	1 day ago
Cail	6.6%	-0.6%	13 hours ago
HIP 14182	49.4%	+1.2%	13 hours ago
Pleiades Sector JC-V d2-62	84.5%	+1.4%	52 minutes ago
Vertam	71.7%	+2.0%	20 hours ago
Irandan	68.5%	+4.1%	52 minutes ago
Liu Beni	56.8%	+4.2%	6 hours ago
HIP 17706	59.0%	+5.5%	11 hours ago
HIP 18218	80.3%	+5.8%	11 hours ago
Teppanik	68.0%	+6.0%	12 hours ago
Hyades Sector DR-V c2-13	65.9%	+10.8%	11 hours ago
Chias Vega	51.0%	+13.7%	2 days ago

The biggest negative trends in this list are due to a failed expansion (San), and then there’s just normal BGS movements.

The biggest positive trends can indicate to others where you’ve been working, so try not to overdo your efforts unless you’re avoiding retreat or similar, where the outcome is more important than the operational secrecy.

The amount of a change indicates to a seasoned BGS operative the size of the effort involved, and likely size of your BGS team, and thus help determine how much effort to put into counter your efforts, so always try to leave some level of reserve rather than go all in on a single system.

Maintaining influence

When boosting your faction, you want to do a variety of tasks – some trade, some bounty hunting, some exploration data drops, and of course, some missions. It's best to understand the states and which actions have the most effect during the state. These are detailed in the reference section of this guide. For example, during boom, trade and exploration data count more than bounties and combat missions. Each state has its own modifiers, so it's best to learn the most common ones or follow the advice of your BGS coordinator.

Maintaining reputation

Sometimes, it's important to squelch (reduce) an expansion, or prevent a conflict. This means you will take a hit with your reputation. Getting it back doesn't need to take a long time. Try these methods instead:

- Exobiology data – fastest way, reputation only with the owning faction
- Combat bounties – fast, boosts faction influence (including non-controlling factions)
- Universal cartographics – can be fast, boosts owning faction influence

Missions

Missions, including passenger missions, can provide either economic or security influence. Donates and group passenger missions are usually the best way of earning positive influence without any negative influence given to another faction.

Some missions, particularly illegal missions, will hurt a target faction, so choose them carefully – either you wish to hurt that faction, or you don't mind if you do.

In-ship 'Horizons'

Try to stack high influence (5 influence is the max) missions of a similar type so that you don't need to change ships.

On-foot 'Odyssey'

Generally, lower influence per mission (max of 4) than Horizons and takes longer to complete (but more fun). Always go to the mission providers first to see if they have a four influence mission available. Three influence missions are available from the terminals.

Combat

Earning combat bounties is a fast way to boost influence in a system for your faction. The great news is that it's also portable, so you can earn bounties in a system you control and drop the bounties at a system you don't control for another method of boosting your faction.

You can earn bounties at a variety of locations:

- Resource sites (normal, low, medium, high, and hazardous)
- Compromised navigation beacons (a bit tougher than hazardous resource sites)

- Weapon fire and pirate signal sources
- Mission targets
- Installations

It's always a good idea to have a kill warrant scanner fitted, so you can earn even more bounties. A KWS will scan the target ship for all bounties, including those from other factions and other systems. Upon killing the target, you will earn all the bounties from all the factions that have active bounties out for that ship. This is a great way of earning free reputation with other factions and boosting your combat income, which helps you get Elite in Combat rank.

Combat bounties provide security influence to the faction that issued the combat bounty. You can submit a combat bounty for any faction present at a station, and it will increase their influence.

If a faction is absent in a system and you can redeem the bounty, no influence is distributed, but your reputation with that faction will improve. This can be useful to hand in bounties collected in another system for factions you don't wish to support. If a faction is present in the system, and you submit the bounty, it will boost that faction, undoing all your hard work, so use an interstellar factors in another system that doesn't have that faction present.

Trade

Since a recent update, trade must be profitable and in high supply or demand. This is indicated by a "three bar" signal.

- If there's three green bars, it indicates high supply or demand, which when coupled with high profit, is the best result for BGS.
- If there's no bars, that's medium demand or supply, which is so-so for BGS effects.
- If there's three red hollow bars, that's the least BGS outcome, and should be avoided. It's not negative, but it's a waste of your time.








MINERALS	
BAUXITE	 4,380
BERTRANDITE	 117,246
COLTAN	 30,996
GALLITE	 125,395
INDITE	 21,563
LEPIDOLITE	 63,677
RUTILE	13,711
URANINITE	 44,473

Figure 1 Trade example with three green bars

In general, you will want to find trade loops of high supply or high demand, with a good price that will deliver profits on both sides of the equation. You can earn a lot of money doing a profitable trade loop, and this will positively impact BGS.

However, over supplying demand (where the good stops being “green”, and demand drops to 0) can lead to negative BGS consequences, so only fulfil the station’s needs, and no further. For example, a small station might have three green bars, but only wants 250 t of goods. Supplying 750 t will eliminate demand, and likely turn the three green bars into red empty bars and hurt BGS.

The old days of trading in 1.5 million credit chunks of any profitable good, such as gold or silver, is gone. It’s now the demand or supply and the profit that counts.

Profitable trade in legal goods provides positive economic influence to the controlling faction of the station, especially when trading in goods with three green bars. High demand is now more important than profit alone. You can still trade in medium (no bars) or low-demand (red bar) goods, but they don’t have the same impact as high-demand goods.

You can trade in illegal goods if there is demand, such as battle weapons or illicit drugs, or through the black market if one exists. You won’t get as good a price for the goods through the black market, but it will allow you to sell goods with no market demand. Negative trade induces a loss in economic (most illegal goods, like imperial slaves) or security (e.g. prohibited weapons) sliders and reduces influence.

You can trade at a loss and reduce the controlling faction’s influence. Again, trading in high-demand goods at a loss is better than medium (no bars) or low (red bars) demand goods.

For a time, it was possible to adjust pricing on fleet carriers and create a huge but false profit (or loss). This no longer works – goods transferred, sold, or bought from a carrier do not affect the BGS.

If you need to bring in a class of goods, such as machinery or food during infrastructure failure, you must visit other systems using a good trade ship. Use Inara’s Data > Commodities search function to find the closest system to find what you need. Fit a fuel scoop or have the Fuel Rats (<https://fuelrats.com/>) on speed dial.

Fleet carriers have ~~no~~ some influence effect on BGS trade

Trade to or from a carrier **through the carrier market** has zero influence effect on BGS but can be very good at helping with reputation and economy sliders. Since the trade update, using your fleet carrier to re-price goods, such as selling gold or silver at 5% of galactic average, to sell at a nearby station for incredible on paper profits, no longer works. This was done to avoid people getting Elite V in trade as well as boosting influence via fake trade trivially easy.

Profitable, high demand trade through **transfers to and from your carrier hold works** just fine. For example, if a Commander finds a low buy price for metals from a system in an infrastructure failure state, say coltan for 480 credits per unit, and then transfers several loads to the carrier’s hold, moves the carrier to the destination system, transfers the coltan back to the ship, and then sells the goods to a station, it will retain its original buy price of 480 cr/unit, and boost the influence of the destination station’s owner and economy sliders. If the goods are sold to the market or bought from the market, this doesn’t work.

Smuggling through transfers also works in the same way – steal or buy illegal goods, transfer the stolen or prohibited goods into the carrier’s hold, move the carrier to the destination system, transfer the goods back out to the ship, and sell them to a black market. The station owner’s influence will decrease. Depending on the goods, security will decrease, such as with battle weapons, and potentially if trading at a loss, the economic slider will also decrease. Black markets are beneficial for anarchies, so anarchies can use fleet carriers to boost their faction’s economy slider if they find a large quantity of stolen goods.

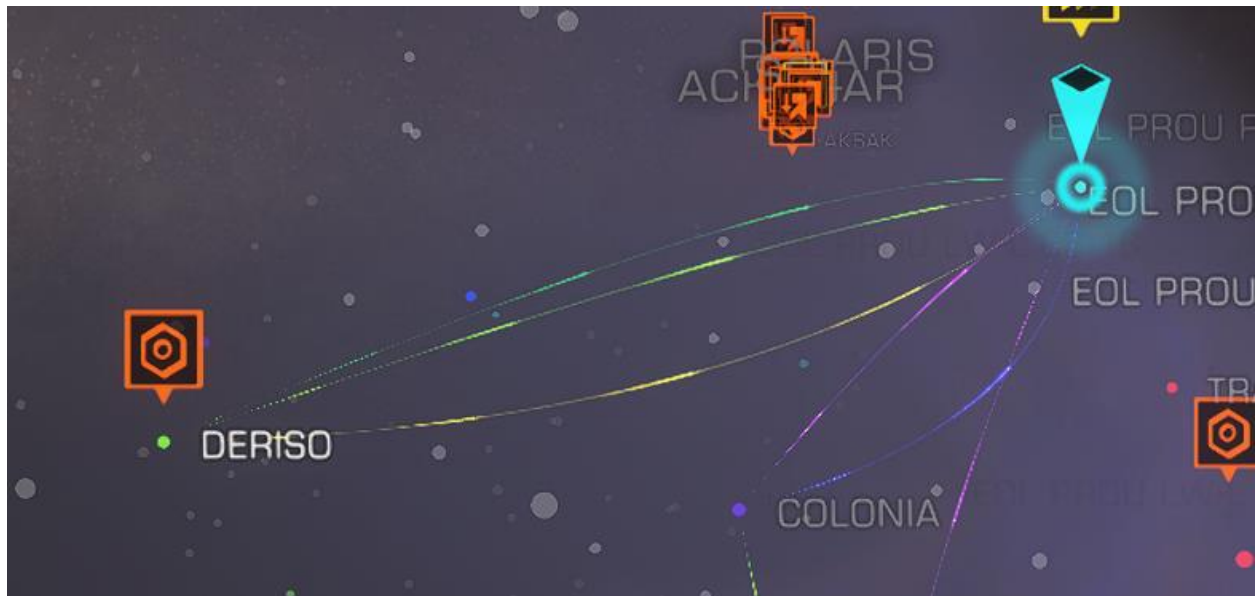
Another use for fleet carriers for BGS is when you are doing missions, such as the 50 mCr source and return { gallite, indite, rutile, coltan, gold, silver } missions. Using your carrier to supply these source and return or mining missions is perfectly acceptable, because the influence comes from the completion of the mission, and not from the trade itself. You can also store unbuyable mined commodities, such as osmium, bromellite, and samarium, on your carrier for later mission use.

However, if in doubt, use a station to fill your trade needs.

Profitable Trade Loops

The game now only accepts trade loops from stations for profitable trade and to fix bad states that are resolved with particular goods, so you will need to use Inara > Data > Trade Routes to find a good route involving the system you're trying to boost. There's in system trade loops which have more effect, especially if you control both stations, than system-to-system trade loops.

If you don't want to use an external tool, the game itself indicates high trade routes between systems using color coded lines in the galaxy map to indicate what's selling well in either direction of nearby systems. If you learn the colors, you can figure out what will trade well between two systems.



To get this view, click the Economy view, and then go down a bit and click “All” in the trade routes view (it’s a bit underneath the PowerPlay and Thargoid views). You’ll see the direction of the trade

flow and the color will indicate the type of goods being traded. Busier systems will have a lot of these lines.

Unprofitable Trade Loops

You can use state modifiers to buy goods at an inflated price, and then sell it to stations that have galactic average or lowered pricing. For example, during boom or civil liberty, agronomic treatment has a much higher buy price from high tech systems. Selling it to a system that is in infrastructure failure will induce a massive loss, which can then be used to reduce the economy slider even further.

Mining

You can earn trade profits through mining. This is a very chill activity and used to be the best way to earn money in the game. Mining is still highly profitable, especially laser platinum mining.

[How to Laser Mine \(2022\)](#)

A mining loop you may wish to consider is mining osmium, bromellite, or one of the other non-buyable commodities, and store them on your carrier. Later, you can use your fleet carrier's supplies to fulfil high influence missions asking for these goods. To do this, you will want a highly defensive mining Python, Anaconda, or Type 10 Defender, and mine 15-20 km outside of a hazardous resource site in a pristine ring. Mining 15-20 km out from the hazres POI will minimize (but not eliminate) pirates looking for your mined goods and allow you to mine these difficult to obtain materials and simultaneously farm combat bounties. I recommend mostly offensive weapons and a few mining lasers, and a very strong hull.

[How to mine in a hazardous resource site \(2023\)](#)

The best way to affect BGS with mining is to find a station looking for a particularly high demand good, such as platinum, bromellite, osmium, or similar, mine the goods, and sell the goods directly to the station without passing through a fleet carrier.

If you just want to earn money, you can store your mined goods on your carrier and sell them later to a high sell station for profit, but it's unlikely to have the same BGS effect as selling directly from your mining ship to a station.

Smuggling

You can smuggle illegal (stolen) goods if there's a black market. This affects the controlling faction's economic (most goods) or security (illegal weapons) and reduces their influence. Smuggling can be fun for role players and somewhat effectively reduces a controlling faction's influence, unless the station controller is an anarchy, when it boosts the anarchy faction.

Sourcing stolen goods can be as simple as taking a "deliver a large number of goods to station X," picking up a load of the goods, and abandoning the mission. You'll take a reputation hit, but you'll also have a hold full of stolen goods. Another way to get them is to visit local megaships and steal cargo from them using hatch breaker limpets. Yet another way is to interdict NPC ships in an anarchy system, particularly cargo ships, disable their drives, and siphon their cargo. You go, pirate Commander!

Cutter tax

If demand is less than four times the size of a cargo hold's capacity, a "tax" will be used to reduce the sell price, thus reducing the overall BGS benefit, which is based upon profitable, high value trades. It's better to have many smaller trades of "green" goods than one big trade that might exceed the demand.

If you are doing trade loops, fill your hold with several or many types of high profit goods, not just the best ones. You'll get better results from BGS as a result because the Cutter tax will not apply.

Examples:

If you have 790 t of LTDs and the sell price is 250,000, but demand is only 1200, then the Cutter tax will apply. This will reduce the sell price by about 25%.

Avoid selling large quantities when demand is in the red or less than the size of a Cutter or Type 9.

Exploration

Exploration provides economic influence. Exploration is the only bucket that has no natural enemy – you cannot counter a commander who delivers exploration data. You can collect data on expedition, or if you need a bit of quick exploration data, you can use Roads to Riches.

- Fast! Roads to riches <https://www.spansh.co.uk/riches>
- Chill! Go on expedition <https://edsm.net>

Earning the daily cap for a single system should only take 30-40 minutes or so in an exploration ship.

Exobiology: Restoring Reputation, or get out of hostile, quick

Exobiology has no effect on BGS. However, it has an awesome superpower – it's portable reputation. If you go out into the black even a little way (say 1000 ly above or below the bubble), you can find plenty of planets with no first footfalls. Sampling plants from these planets and keeping them for a rainy day is the best way to restore your reputation with a faction. There is literally no faster way than using exobiology.

The best way to maintain your reputation is not to let yourself get hostile. Once in the lower reaches of unfriendly, go to one of the controlling faction's large space stations or planetary ports and drop 60-90 mCr of exobiology data. This gives you immediate allied status. Exobiology does not affect the faction's influence, so you can do this as often as needed.

You can earn exobiology data from Billionaire's Boulevard (<https://cmdrs-toolbox.com/billionaires-boulevard>) or, better yet, go on a mini-expedition and get the first discovery of plants. It's fun and relaxing.

Sometimes, you've been at war with a faction for so long that you're hostile. This means you cannot land at any of their ports or settlements without being shot at. Sometimes, you just want to shoot at them some more (say for example, if the faction controls the only station in a system you're trying to take over).

If you're hostile, to get allied with a faction in as short a time as possible:

- Go to a hazardous resource site in a system they control. Earn 5-10 mCr of combat bounties
- Go to a system they are present in, but do not control. Hand the bounties in at a non-controlled station. This will get you out of hostile.
- Go to a system they control and find one of their stations with Vista Genomics. Hand in 60-90 mCr of exobiology data. You will be at once allied with them.

Worst case scenario, you can do it the old fashioned, slow way. If you don't mind boosting the faction's influence, you can drop a 30+ mCr combat bounty in a small system and become allied. This has the unfortunate side effect of boosting the faction within the system, which is usually a terrible idea, and you'll have to return later to fix your mistake.

Use exobiology by preference. It's faster than combat bounties and better for BGS.

Reducing influence

Reducing influence is one of the essential tools in the more advanced BGS Cmdrs toolbox – by reducing a faction, you might be able to force a faction into a conflict, stop expansion, or even retreat the faction. You can do a range of activities to reduce faction influence.

Failing missions

Failing donation- and other missions is simple – just wait and they will fail.

Failing passenger missions can be fast and simple if you can handle rebuys. Fill a shieldless D-rated Type 6 or 7 with cabins, take passengers, and then blow it up by hitting the sides of the station until dead or using the self-destruct feature. You can also fail passenger missions by getting scanned if the passengers don't like being scanned, create hull damage if the passengers don't like hull damage, but this takes longer than simply blowing up the ship.

When failing a mission, the influence impact on the victim faction is the first reward choice, which is usually one or two influence.

Clean Killing

Clean killing is just that – find a clean (unwanted) ship or NPC at an Odyssey settlement from the faction you'd like to reduce and kill it. Clean killing ships or NPCs takes a little time, and eventually, you'll get to meet Advanced Tactical Response (ATR) ships or Omnipol, but it is the most effective way of reducing a faction's influence.

Negative actions

Review the negative destination actions at <https://cdb.sotl.org.uk/missions> to identify actions you might be able to take to reduce the faction's influence.

Inducing negative states

Pushing hard enough on negative actions can reduce the economic or security sliders to the point that an undesirable state will be triggered upon the next tick, such as civil unrest or bust. Push hard

enough and the system will enter lockdown, which is counterproductive if you're trying to reduce a faction's system influence, because lockdown slows down negative actions.

CONFLICTS

When a faction is above 7%, it is above the conflict threshold. This means you can be at war or in an election, depending on the two faction's government ethos.

Government Ethos

Criminals	Autocrats	Corporations	Social
Anarchists	Dictatorship	Corporation	Communism
	Feudal		Confederacy
	Patronage		Cooperative
	Prison Colony		Democracy
	Theocracy*		Theocracy*

Source: Novaforce BGS Guide

Theocracy – it depends if an NPC or PMF

Occasionally, factions – especially those placed directly by Frontier – will have an ethos that does not match the usual one for their government type. This is not a bug; it is just an extra surprise. You can test ethos outside conflicts to some extent: Criminal factions offer far more illegal missions. Social and Criminal factions tend to open black markets, while Autocrats and Corporations tend to close them. Sirius Inc's in-game faction is a Corporate Democracy, and Race Marshalls, although an anarchy, is one of the very few that will offer donate missions. These factions were created at a time before you had to choose a single ethos.

Conflict table

	Criminals	Autocrats	Corporations	Social
Criminals	War	War	War	War
Autocrats	War	Elections	War	War
Corporations	War	War	Elections	War
Social	War	War	War	Elections

Source: Novaforce BGS Guide

Wars

Wars are held between anarchies or factions that have a different ethos. Space CZs have combat missions that can be a healthy source of income. At the end of each day, the number of CZs won, objectives completed, combat bonds, and combat-related missions handed in are tallied up, and the day's winner is declared. This is why handing all bonds and missions in before the end of each daily tick is vital; it could be the difference between winning a day or not.

Some of the triggers that help win days in a war:

- Winning Combat Zones
- Completing CZ objectives, including killing spec ops and capturing ground bases
- Completing "Kill X enemy ships" missions
- Handing in combat bonds and bounties
- Any combat related mission, such as assassination missions

- Installation immediate scenarios with a combat focus

If you take war-time missions, if you don't do some form of combat, it's unlikely to count towards the win state for a day. This applies to war time salvage and strategic courier jobs)

The winner is the first faction to win four days, or most days by day 7 of the war. After the war, the defeated faction's asset at risk is assigned to the winning faction. Lastly, the faction that won the most times at each Odyssey settlement (other than any staked in the conflict itself) is assigned as the new owner of the settlement. This can transfer settlements to anarchies or other factions by fighting once for a faction in each settlement but still winning the overall war by doing many space combat zones.

Strategy question: to keep or not to keep Odyssey settlements.

It is easy to dismiss the importance of Odyssey settlements. There are pros and cons to keeping settlements or giving them to other factions.

A common strategy is to give all settlements to the anarchy faction, as this will be a source of Odyssey suit missions. This also denies all the other secondary factions opportunities for trade, black markets, and universal cartographics, so in theory, the system should be more stable.

There are advantages of giving at least one large pad Odyssey settlement to each faction: you can trade with the faction – either positive or negative. Some settlements have universal cartographics and a black market, which will help make illegal trade at that settlement.

If you are constantly struggling with influence with secondary factions, it might make sense to give all settlements to the anarchy or be more selective about it – i.e., don't allow a problematic faction to have any trade opportunities in the system at all by denying them settlements.

Factions with assets end up in more conflicts, so denying factions assets will reduce the number of conflicts. If you are attacking a system and all factions have assets, it's much easier to lock up influence with minor pushes.

Use your best judgment and use conflicts to transfer the assets as you see fit.

Low, Medium, or High CZ's? You decide.

A single commander in a small ship will be able to clear more low CZs than high CZs. The win condition for wars is to complete objectives and win the most number of CZs. Low CZs earn less bonds than High CZs, and Low CZs take less time than High CZs.

If you find spamming Low CZs boring, do medium or high CZs, knowing that you could do more Low CZs, but you're now having a good time. If you find doing High CZs difficult or impossible, do Low CZs. It's entirely up to you.

This guide highly recommends playing as a team of up to four Cmdrs, sharing the bonds and wins. You are more likely to win a war if you're playing as a group. You'll earn more bonds, and you'll win more objectives and war win conditions as a team.

Ground or Space? You decide.

It is thought, but untested, that space CZs are more impactful than their equivalent ground CZs, because high space CZs have one or two objectives, and they count towards the overall daily win criteria. However, if you hate space CZs and love ground CZs, do the ground CZs because the overall number of wins and bonds count, and high ground CZs earn the most combat bonds. This is an avenue of further research, and in the absence of hard data, do the CZs you love to fight.

Top tip: do as many high CZs as possible if you are contested. There is no limit to the number of CZs, so the faction that wins the most CZs each day will win the war. This guide highly recommends working as a team to complete the CZs faster. Completion of CZ wins is the primary objective, not earning bonds.

Coups

When a non-controlling faction gets above 60%, it automatically triggers a coup conflict, resulting in a war or election with the controlling faction. Generally, a faction's ability to rise above 60% happens if the coup faction has no assets or could rise above the other factions in some other way, such as being in retreat.

Elections

Elections are held between factions that have a similar ethos. The way you win elections is to make high demand profitable trade (if you can), drop universal cartographics (if you can), and lastly, complete non-combat missions:

- Sensitive poll data courier missions
- Liberate diplomatic bag missions – DO NOT FIRE YOUR WEAPONS
- Liberate political prisoners – DO NOT FIRE YOUR WEAPONS
- Poll data retrieval
- Smuggling

Trade and universal cartographics, and indeed any economic mission, will contribute to winning an election and is the “easy” mode if your faction owns a station with a market and universal cartographics.

When doing election missions, if you get your weapons out, you're not going to have any effect on the election, and you've wasted your time. So try to complete the mission without firing once on the NPCs in the election scenario.

There is no known upper limit on election missions. You must do more election missions, trade, and universal cartographics to win a contested election than the opposing faction.

EXPANSIONS

Expansions start from a system that goes above 75% influence. Station news will announce which system this is. Under normal circumstances, expansion is locked in but could still misfire or be misdirected elsewhere.

The first goal of every new faction is to manipulate the BGS to boost your faction to have the most influence of all the factions, triggering several conflicts along the way to control the system eventually.

After that, you will want to push your faction to over 75% to expand your faction into a nearby system. Once you have a few systems, the job becomes maintaining your influence levels to protect your systems from being overrun by NPCs and other players.

Expansion diplomacy

The best way to ensure a smooth expansion experience is to expand to a system where no other players exist today. However, you will expand into someone else's systems within most of the bubble.

If you think you are expanding into an active PMF's system, contact them first and try to honor the "first there owns the system" golden rule. You'll be a guest in their system. They'll likely be happy to have you because a full system makes it difficult for hostile factions.

Detecting inactive PMFs

Sadly, there are many defunct PMFs. It's important to determine if you are expanding into an active or defunct PMF. The best way to find out if they're defunct is to:

- In the game, go to the Squadron hub, search for the squadron, and find the lead Commander's name. It will be in the quote. Search for the Commander in the Main menu > Social > Search Commander. Find out when they last logged on. If it's recent, they're likely active. Add them as a friend and communicate through the game.
- Search Inara for the faction and see if you can contact their leadership. Often, there will be a Discord link.
- Search ED BGS for the faction's and commander's names. You might find someone representing the faction or knowing who to contact.
- Ask ED BGS #bgs-disputes if anyone knows of the leadership Commanders or representing that faction.

If you can't reach squadron leadership by using the game, Inara, ED BGS, or the Commander hasn't played in more than six months to a year, you can likely consider the faction to be defunct. Consider all their systems up for grabs. You'll find out soon enough when you try to take one of their systems.

Where will I expand? The expansion cube

Expansions happen based upon a cube surrounding the expansion system.

Max diagonal distance = $\sqrt{3}$ * expansion_distance

- Normal expansion – 20 ly – max cube distance is 34 ly
- Extended range expansion – 30 ly – max cube distance is 52 ly
- Third and failed expansions – no more expansions from that system are ever allowed

Using this formula, it's theoretically possible to expand to a system up to 34 ly away from your expansion system, or even up to 52 ly away with an extended range expansion. However, it's much more likely to find systems that expand within 20 ly of your expansion system.

You can easily find all the expansion targets within 20 ly by searching Inara for your expansion system and going to Expansion targets tab. Apply the rules of expansion to find the most likely system. If you want to go to a particular system, make the system more appealing to the algorithm by preparing the system before you get there.

Which system will be the expansion system?

What happens if there are two or more systems above 75%? For example, some nefarious foe detects your expansion state and raises another system above 75% to try and deflect you from their systems. The game will choose one of these two expansion systems on the last day of expansion.

According to the game, expansions happen from systems that are happiest. If true, this is one of the few remaining places in the game where happiness is considered. So, if you want to expand from a particular system, make them happy by doing what they want – delivering high-demand trade, doing influential expansion missions, and dropping exploration data.

However, in practice, the choice of which system expands seems to be random. If you want to control the system from which you expand, only allow a single system to be in expansion. This means you must reduce all other high influence systems and keep on top of their influence levels throughout the expansion attempt.

Rules of Expansion

The algorithm will pick a system within the current expansion range:

1. That the expanding faction has never been to before, and has less than 7 factions
2. Exactly 7 factions with a suitable non-native target faction – this starts an Invasion war. If multiple systems are possible, the system with the lowest influence target will be picked.
3. Been retreated from before, and less than 7 factions
4. Expansion will fail. If this expansion occurs within the normal range, the next expansion will have an extended range, even if it occurs from a different system.
5. If an extended range expansion also fails, then that system will be permanently blocked from future expansions – by **any** faction. Take care to avoid this effect unless you actually want it!

You are unlikely to be able to expand into a permit-locked system. Some systems are impossible to expand to, such as Sol, Shinrarta Dezhra, and a few others.

There are systems in the game with 8 factions – these are generally in invasion, but not always. The expansion algorithm does not consider these systems, so if you want to go there, you must retreat at least one non-native faction from the system to allow you a shot at the system.

On completion of an expansion, you will instantly lose 15% influence in the system you are expanding from. This is called the “expansion tax.”

Rules of Invasion

When invading a system, you will fight either the lowest faction in retreat, or the lowest non-native faction that is not in a conflict or a conflict cool-down period. If you want to fight a specific non-native faction, get all the others tied up in conflicts before the expansion ends. Even if the controlling faction is non-native, it is not possible to directly attack them with an invasion.

If you notice that a hostile faction might be about to invade one of your systems in a few days from now, lock up all non-native factions in conflict, and the invasion algorithm will skip your system.

Invasion fights are always Wars even if the two factions would normally have an Election. The winning faction stays in the system, while the loser will instantly retreat at the end of the war cooldown.

Preparing a system for expansion

If you wish a system to be a more workable target for expansion, there are things you can do before you arrive to maximize your chances of entering a system:

- If there are seven factions, you can retreat a non-native faction before expansion starts. Retreat is no small feat, so it's best to get this done before expanding – though not too far in advance, or some other faction might take advantage of your work!
- If there are multiple non-native factions, you might want to fight a particular non-native faction in the Invasion. Create conflicts for all the others, though remember that you can't invade a non-native faction this way.

Taking over a system, slowly

If you've just entered a system that you want to take over, you have two paths:

- Fight necessary conflicts between you and the controlling faction
- Go into retreat as quickly as possible, and then use retreat to boost past all other factions and cause a coup.

Let's take the first path. The first thing you'll want to do is lock up most of the influence of the secondary factions in wars so you can jump over them. To do this, boost the bottom of each pair of factions and reduce the top faction so that they will collide influence into a conflict. You won't necessarily fight these wars; you want the influence locked up, so you can jump past them.

Once most or all secondary factions conflict, you can boost your faction. This will take influence from the controlling faction. The goal is to jump over all the secondary factions before the conflicts end, without being blocked from docking at the controlling faction's stations. If a secondary faction owns a station, you may want to base your operations out of there so you can do clean kills and other negative actions while boosting your faction.

Once you meet the controlling faction in influence, you are set for a conflict to control the system. Win that conflict, and the system is yours. Boost yourself away from the other factions to maintain a healthy 15-20% margin of control, and it will be difficult for the other factions to force you back into another fight for control of the system.

Taking over a system, quickly

The other take over pathway is high risk, but it's fast. Go into retreat by reducing your faction to less than 2.5%. Now, assuming you have sufficient BGS resources whilst in retreat, boost your faction with trade (if you own a station), exploration (if you own a station), mission and combat bounties. When you're the lowest faction, taking influence from other factions is easy, but once you get above around 20%, it becomes harder. Keep pushing until you get to 60%. This will force a coup (a mandatory war) with the controlling faction. Win the war, and the system is yours. This is risky because during retreat, you are at risk of being retreated if you don't have sufficient BGS resources to fight to stay in the system, so only take this path if you are certain you have the resources to boost your faction every single day for the duration of the retreat.

Backfilling systems

Work with nearby friendly PMFs to expand into each other's systems. This keeps hostile factions at bay (or at least makes it harder for them) and gives you a friend to help combat invasions if they happen.

Expansions: Get rich quick

The expansion state can be useful on its own – industrial and refinery systems in expansion offer allied Commanders missions worth up to 50 million credits for delivering buyable minerals, such as bertrandite, indite, and gallite. Many factions try to continue expanding for this reason.

RETREAT

Retreat is where a non-native faction falls below 2.5% influence. If the faction stays below 2.5% on the last day of retreat, it will leave the system. Once retreat is pending or active, a faction can boost the faction above 2.5% and avoid being retreated – if the faction is above 2.5% on the last day of retreat.

The Important Day

The most important day of retreat is the last day defined is active day 5 into active day 6, as defined by the daily tick (the weekly tick doesn't count). On the fifth active day, you will need to push hard with negative actions to retreat a faction. If you're trying to keep a faction in the system, you will need to boost the faction hard on the fifth active day. It is common to spend the first few days collecting bounties and completing missions ready to hand in on the fifth active day.

Retreating a faction

If you want to retreat a faction, lock up most of the influence within a system by getting most of the middling factions into conflicts, and then push the controlling faction up hard. Finally, reduce the target faction influence by:

- Clean kills
- Killing Odyssey settlements

- Failing missions
- Negative missions (avoids notoriety)
- Attacking installations and megaships
- Smuggling and black markets

Once retreat goes pending, work out when the fourth active day will be, and make sure you are doing sufficient activities to keep them under 2.5% on the fifth day. Keep pushing until they are gone.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Crime and punishment is how the game will punish you for committing crimes. If you manage your crimes properly, you don't have to spend much time (or at all) in space jail, so let's talk about managing your fines, bounties, and notoriety.

Fines

Fines are issued by factions for small infractions like bumping into other ships when departing a station or firing a weapon (but not killing) an NPC or Commander. If you're running regularly with non-zero notoriety, fines can become more annoying to deal with than bounties, because you can't use interstellar factors to clear the fine.

Fines can be paid off in any system with the local faction by going to Administration > Fines. You can also clear fines at any interstellar factor where the faction involved is not present, if you have zero notoriety.

Bounties

Bounties are issued to the Commander **and** the ship or suit you did it in when you kill an NPC or Commander. Killing sufficient NPCs or Commanders will incur notoriety. Bounties can be more difficult to pay off, and you will appear on the naughty list in station news until you clear your bounty.

If you store a ship module while the ship has a bounty, the module is marked as having a small bounty. Transferring or refitting the module is only possible if you can pay the bounty, so it's best to keep ships together until you've cleared the ship's bounty. You can only clear the bounty if your notoriety is zero, so this can be a hassle if you need to share modules amongst your fleet.

Local bounties

Local bounties are bounties issued by a faction after killing one of their ships, a Commander at one of their settlements, or one of their NPCs. If you have a bounty with a faction, your Commander name will be on the station news local bounty list wherever that faction exists. It's not "local" but locked to the faction that issued the fine. If you have a local bounty with a faction that owns 100 systems, you will be listed in 100 systems. This is not ideal if you're trying to be stealthy.

Local bounties can be cleared at interstellar factors when you have a notoriety of zero, the issuing faction is absent, or you can hand yourself in. In both cases, it's preferable to clear the bounty in the ship or suit you did the crimes in, so the ship or suit is also cleared of the bounty.

Global bounties

Global bounties are mostly issued by the superpowers for killing their ships. This happens mostly if you are in an exploited or controlled PowerPlay system, but it can happen in systems aligned with a superpower.

Global bounties are difficult to clear. You need to find out who issued the bounty and go somewhere like the space jail in HR 1172 in the Pleiades, where there are no factions and no powers, or find an interstellar factor without the Superpower, Power, or faction that issued the global bounty. For example, if you've picked up a Federation global bounty, you need to find an interstellar factor that doesn't have a single Federation faction, which is difficult.

Notoriety

If you're on a clean killing spree, you'll rack up some very large bounties, but you'll also rack up notoriety. Notoriety ranges from 1 (you've killed a few people ... let's call it by accident) to 10 (you've been on a killing spree).

As you increase notoriety, an increasing array of local system authority ships will show up ever sooner to try to kill you. Generally, this is not a problem... until ATR arrives. These ships are super-engineered and have station lasers for guns. You will die if you stick around, so get ready to leave.

If you need to keep on clean killing, simply jump to a nearby system and go back. The cycle will start again, with ATR eventually arriving and you leaving.

Other than handing yourself in, you cannot use the local administration panel or interstellar factors to hand in bounties, pay fines, or do something similar when you have notoriety. If you want to keep on killing, this is not a problem, but eventually, you will want to take care of your fines and bounties. If you hand yourself in and you can afford to pay your bounties and fines, you will still be notorious, but you will be clean and located in the nearest space jail.

To clear notoriety is extremely simple but time-consuming. Land somewhere safe and leave the game running. At notoriety 10, some 20 hours later, you'll have a notoriety of zero, and you can take care of your fines and bounties. You need to re-log to the main menu and log back into the game to use the facilities, such as interstellar factors, as it most likely will not see your bounties until you re-log.

Naughty list

At the bottom of the station news is the list of the five Commanders with the most bounties.

If you're trying to be stealthy, appearing in this list is bad, so you need to take care of your fines and bounties.

Interstellar factors

If your notoriety is zero, you can fly to a low security system with a station with an interstellar factors. You can search for these in-game, or via Inara.

Space Jail

Sometimes, it's just faster to hand yourself in, pay the bounties, and fly back to where you were. You will need sufficient credits to pay off the bounties. If you've been on a lengthy and successful clean killing spree, your bounties might be extremely large, so remember that you don't want to end up penniless and unable to afford rebuys.

REFERENCE

The Bucket Model

BGS is designed to involve you in as many game loops as possible. Seasoned BGS Commanders know this and will do a variety of tasks, not just one. However, if you don't find a game loop fun, like mining or ground missions, it's probably best to skip it because BGS should not be a second job. This is why successful BGS teams should have more than one BGS operative – to avoid burnout and ensure that as many buckets can be filled daily.

Internally, the game has many buckets, levers, triggers, transaction values, traffic levels, whatever you choose to call them:

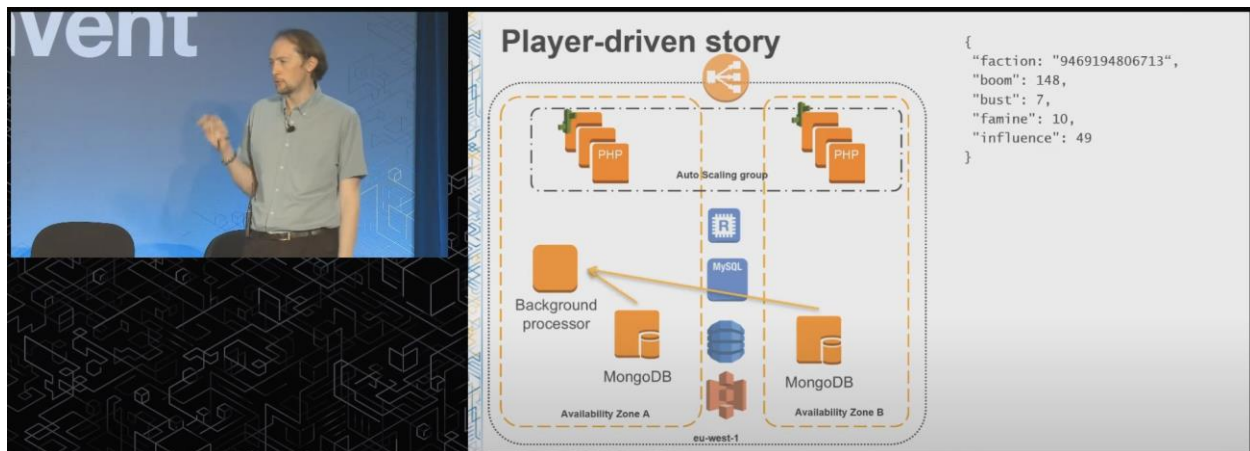


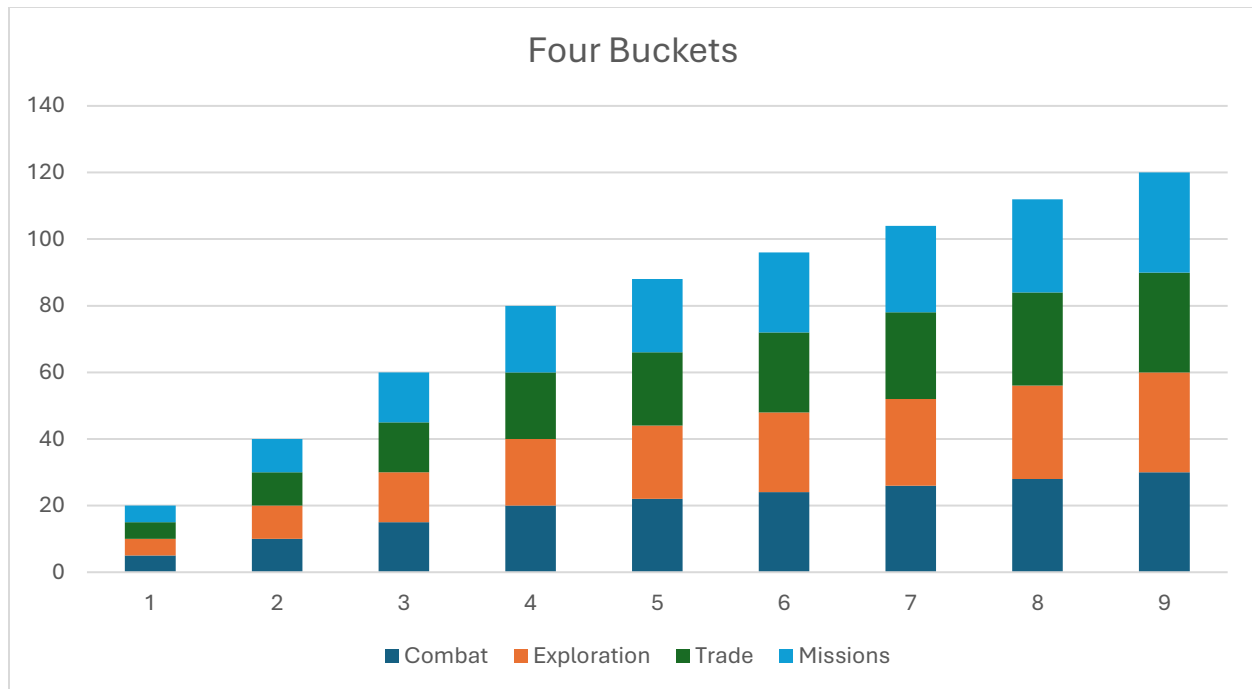
Figure 2: FDev documenting some of the internal buckets

Different types of actions fill or empty these internal buckets. Some of this can be surfaced using the table as seen on page 45. For example, bringing medicines empties the outbreak bucket, eventually clearing that state.

Various factions have tested a four bucket model, consisting of trade, exploration, combat, and missions, which simplifies but reasonably and successfully represents the game's behavior as how these levers, triggers, and so on are applied to each tick.

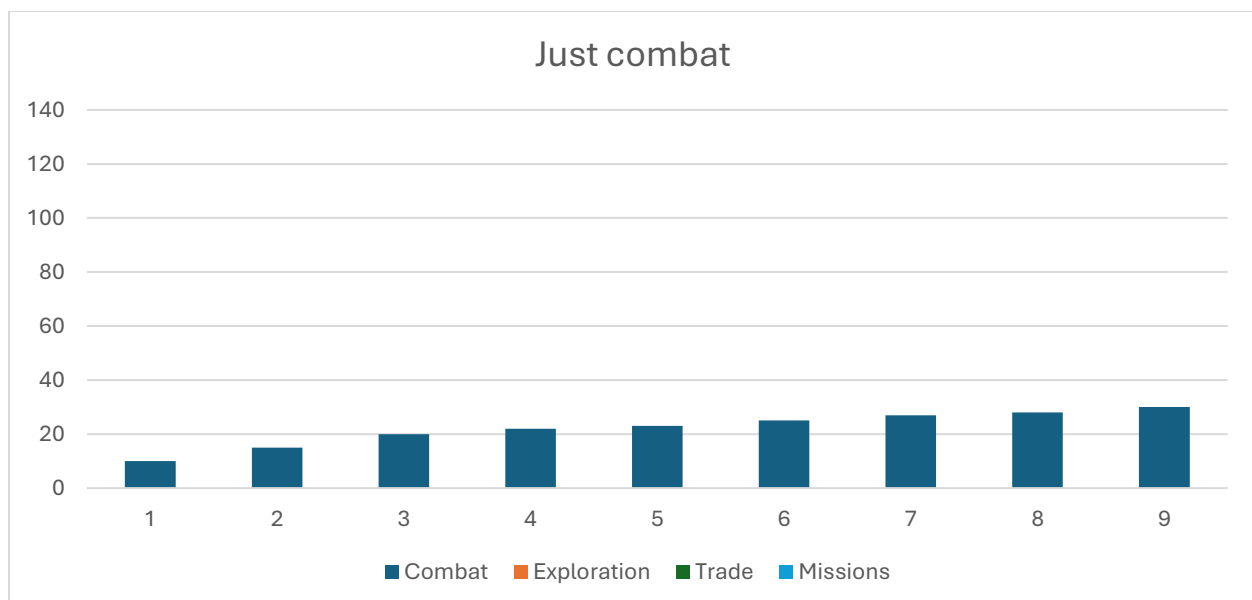
Due to the design of these buckets – real or the four bucket model, filling one bucket is not as effective as filling all buckets – you will get more return on time invested by doing multiple relevant actions to the active states affecting a faction.

Some Commanders will do combat bounties because it is the most time-efficient method of boosting influence, but they will be working harder than they need because they only fill one bucket. Just doing combat alone is less effective than doing a bit of profitable trade, dropping some exploration data, dropping a smaller amount of combat bounties, and doing a few missions.



For the same amount of play time, four buckets achieve a great deal more influence and positive state change than just doing one activity alone. It's possible to more easily achieve a "perfect day" – there are tables that describe the most amount of influence possible on a "perfect day."

However, if you're really stuck, and just want to move the security slider and gain a little influence, or just love combat, there's nothing wrong with doing a bit of combat. Everything helps.



Although just doing combat is worth doing if you only have say 15-20 minutes to play a day, because you won't be soft capped. If you have a couple of hours, the soft caps mean just doing one bucket alone is not as efficient as doing a bit of effort into all four buckets.

Initially, filling the bucket goes fast, but as it fills, it is thought that the bucket gets wider, so it needs more and more effort. Once the bucket is full, a trigger is reached, and something happens, like the next economic state is reached. The bucket is emptied, and the process starts over.

Some states limit the buckets that are in play. For example, during a war, only the combat bucket works. Doing non-combat-related missions, dropping exploration data, or doing trade doesn't help the war.

Diminishing returns

In 2016, FDev said outright in a live stream that the game has soft caps. In the post 4.0 Elite Dangerous galaxy, instead of soft caps, there are ever diminishing returns. Some factions have modelled this on a logarithmic scale:

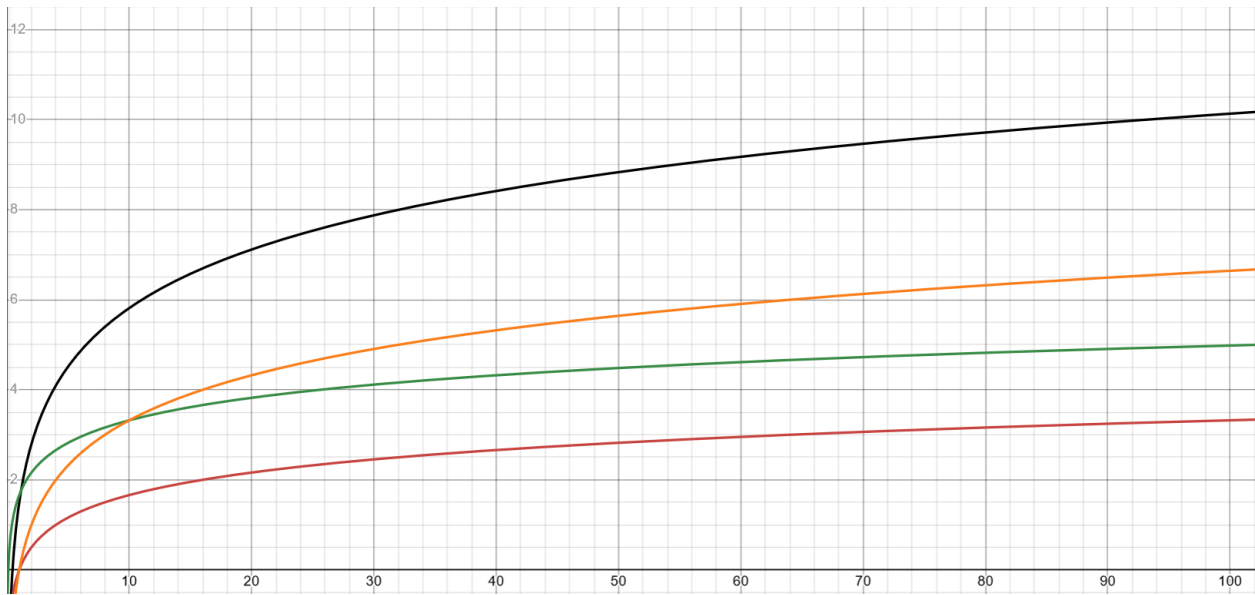


Figure 3 Effort versus relative influence. Note the Y axis is not influence gained directly, but a relative effort. Source: Cmdr Cluster Fox

In figure 3, combat is black, exploration is orange, trade is in green, and missions are in red. This indicates that doing mostly some combat, some exploration, and some trade is of the most help, followed by missions. Note how soon the graphs taper off, so it's worth doing a little of each bucket, rather than a lot of any single bucket.

BGS is not supposed to be a second job, and Frontier wants multiple Commanders working together for a shared goal. Initially, your actions will have a large effect, but as you do more and more of the same actions within a single bucket, your actions will have a reduced effect until the increase to the bucket is negligible.

The returns on effort are related to system population size, with larger systems requiring larger effort than smaller systems. Larger systems therefore require more work to move the same amount of influence on a so-called "perfect day".

SINC recommends the following maximum contributions per player per day per system to avoid player burn out and yet still produce appreciable influence gains for the effort exerted. If you think you are being contested, you might want to do a bit more than the recommended amounts, but not by a lot.

	Small (< 1m pop) Uncontested	Medium (1m-25m)	Large (>25m) Contested
Profitable trade	10 mCr	20 mCr	30 mCr
Exploration data	5 mCr	10 mCr	15 mCr
Missions INF	15 INF	25 INF	50 INF
Combat bounties	10 mCr	20 mCr	30 mCr

If you are being contested, regardless of system size, make sure that you're leveraging the yin-yang model by doing positives and negatives for all relevant factions. A good rule of thumb is to have a single beneficiary faction and a single victim faction that will give up influence for the beneficiary. However, if you are reducing the controlling faction, you will want to push all the other (influence unlocked) factions a little in concert with negative actions for the controlling faction to maximize influence transfer, remembering that influence flows to low influence factions more easily than high influence factions.

The only exceptions to the diminishing returns model are wars and elections. You need to do as many of these as you can. Winning a day in a conflict is measured by successful objective completion, such as winning a combat zone, handing in combat bonds, or completing election missions. The best way to win conflicts is to do more than your opponent, so it's always worthwhile to team up and do them together. You'll have more fun, and you're more likely to win.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is easily the most important BGS skill. BGS coordinators can do the work of hundreds of BGS operatives and save months of work with a single successful negotiation. You can kill your faction with a failed negotiation or refusing to negotiate. BGS operatives are likely to come across other Commanders, and they need to be diplomatic and not just open fire immediately.

Diplomacy is not optional. There has been extremely expansionist but isolationist powerhouse factions that have been reduced to backwater status by their neighbors agreeing to attack the powerhouse faction because the faction refused to negotiate or do diplomacy in any way. Never ending warfare and conflict has burned out many a BGS team. Burnout effectively destroys these factions, a situation that could have easily been avoided with a bit of diplomacy, negotiation and compromise.

BGS Coordinators should use diplomacy to negotiate with nearby player factions with system swaps, non-aggression pacts, and coalition agreements to backfill each other's systems, defend each other, and plan system ownership together. These alliances can build up powerful regional blocks, avoid a great deal of unnecessary war that burns out BGS teams, and protect smaller factions from expansionist BGS factions.

Diplomacy usually happens on Discord, and the primary location for many BGS disputes is the ED BGS Discord server. Other diplomatic outposts include:

- Southern Edge Diplomacy <https://discord.gg/KPEX5FE98y>
- Utopia (Pranav Antal has hundreds of factions present) <https://discord.me/antal>
- More – please send in your suggestions

Being a good guest

Being a good guest can set you up to become an ally or coalition partner of other factions. When you expand into their systems, it's best if you talk with them before you arrive, and make sure that they know that you're only there to backfill the system, and not to take the system. Let them know your intentions – will you be boosting yourself to second spot? Will you be taking any settlements or ports? If so, negotiate with them before it happens to avoid any issues.

Once you are solidly within the system, either do no work there, or signal to your hosts that you're about to fight a conflict or boost yourself, so they are not surprised by your fleet carriers or increased traffic or pressure on their controlling influence.

Maintaining other faction's system

Sometimes, you need to prep a system in order to expand into it, or that you want to get rid of a problematic faction. Work with the system owner to agree on any changes, and then preferably work together to make it happen. Whatever happens, don't exceed your authority in the system, otherwise you might turn an ally into a foe, and set off forever war, which helps no one.

If the system is player faction free, of course, just go ahead and do what you need. First come, first served.

Influence distribution

When Commanders do actions or missions to boost or reduce a faction's influence, it will affect the overall system influence levels:

- Influence adds to 100%, so make sure you're doing positive and negative activities.
- Pushing a controlling faction is hard, especially in large population systems or above 50% influence. A table in the reference section shows the expected results based on population size and effort.
- If you only do positive actions for your controlling faction, you will work much harder than BGS Coordinators pushing the controlling faction and pulling influence (reducing) secondary factions.
- The bigger the population, the harder it is to shift influence. Smaller systems require less effort.
- Pushing a low-influence faction (less than 10%) will have outsized effects on high-influence factions, you can reduce a controlling faction considerably by boosting several low influence factions.

Interpreting station news

Station news is where you'll find out first about your efforts. There are several sections:

- Factions' status. This is where you will learn about the current states, and the other places a faction is having conflicts, and if expansion is pending or active.
- Local bounties. You can often find out the names of Cmdrs who are targeting your faction in this section.
- Power bounties. If you are in a PowerPlay system, the Cmdrs who have been targeting the local power's ships will be listed.
- Global bounties. In certain systems, global bounties will be listed. These are often given by the superpowers (Federation, Alliance, and Empire). These bounties can be difficult to get rid of, and so Cmdr names might be listed for some time.
- Number of bounties issued. The higher the number, the more activity occurring.
- Number of Cmdrs within the system. If you have a quiet system with 100+ Cmdrs being shown, you're about to have a very bad time.
- Ships in the system. Understanding the nature of the Cmdr traffic entering the system is important. Realize that ships that do not jump into the system aren't shown, so it's entirely possible that you might not see ships that are actually attacking you if they are staying on a local carrier or station.

Maintaining anarchy systems

Maintaining anarchy systems is a difficult task, and so it's in the reference section for BGS Coordinators.

After the Odyssey release, anarchies, which were already difficult to maintain, became a nightmare with years of effort lost because random players wanted to grind out shiny suits. Many player anarchy factions are now defunct, and there's fewer and fewer anarchy-controlled systems in the game.

This is due to the difficulties in maintaining anarchies, let alone letting them expand. Getting sufficient system influence to remain in control can be an uphill battle even for experienced BGS coordinators. Some of the issues include:

- No bounties. Earning combat bounties can only come from mission targets.
- With the rare exception of the Race Marshalls, anarchies do not offer donate missions.
- No security slider. Efforts to bolster security may not translate to boosting the anarchy's influence.
- No (or drastically reduced) penalties for murder and violent crimes
- Smuggling (i.e. selling stolen or illegal goods to the black market) helps the anarchy, but smuggling requires large quantities of stolen goods, which can be difficult to obtain in bulk.

The best way to keep an anarchy faction in control of a system is to shed all assets other than the controlling station. All Odyssey settlements, Horizon settlements, and installations must be transferred to other factions. This reduces the risk from random players entering the system and effectively clean killing all your inhabitants. Although random players do not receive any notoriety

and no bounties from clean killing your inhabitants, it still penalizes the anarchy's influence, albeit at a slower rate than normal factions.

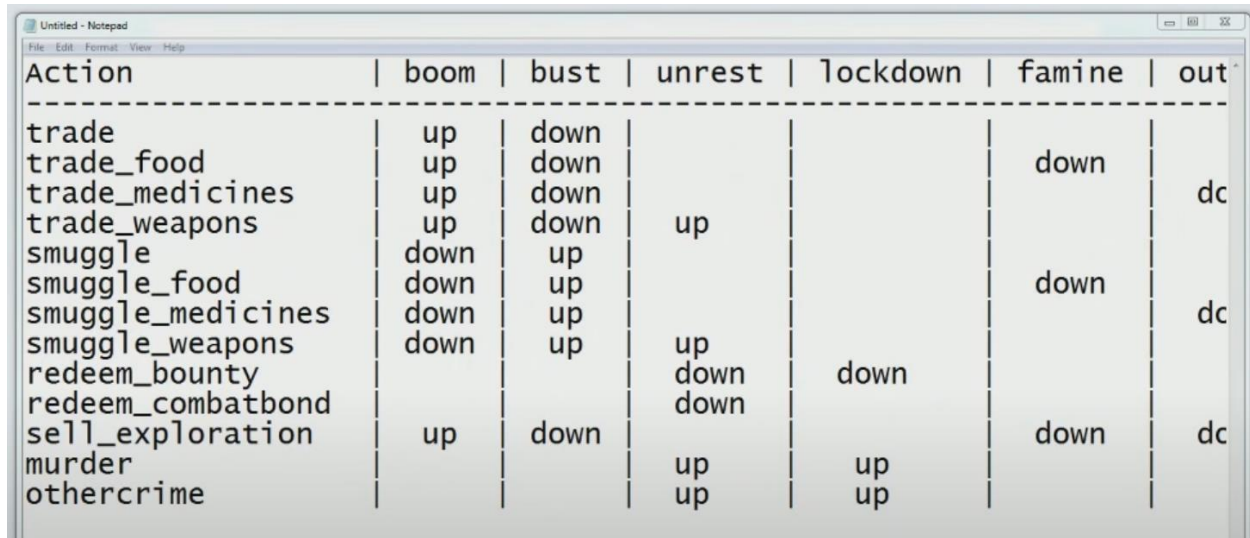
To boost an anarchy, take all forms (Horizons, passengers, Odyssey) of missions for the anarchy, particularly those that target factions within the same system, dropping exploration data, and trade all work. Obtaining bounty vouchers by taking on missions with mission targets is the only viable option to earning bounty vouchers. You can also bounty hunt within 1000 km of anarchy owned orbital star ports, but this is tricky, and it's just easier to let the mission targets interdict you in anarchy owned space, and then kill them.

If you have any further tips on how best to manage anarchy factions, please do drop us a note.

Actions

	Economic	Security	Influence	Conflict	Other
Mission	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
Trade	Up		Up	Election	Pirate attack up
Trade Food	Up		Up	Election	
Trade Medicines	Up		Up	Election	Outbreak down
Trade Weapons	Up	Up	Up	Election	Pirate attack down
Search and Rescue		Up	Up	Election	
Smuggle	Down		Down	Election	Pirate attack up
Smuggle Food	Down		Down	Election	
Smuggle medicines	Down		Down	Election	Outbreak down
Smuggle Weapons	Down	Down	Down	Election	
Redeem bounties		Up	Up	War and civil war	Pirate attack down
Redeem combat bonds		Up		War and civil war	Pirate attack outbreak up
Sell exploration data	Up		Up	Election	Outbreak down
Scenario objectives	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Cargo scenarios affect trade, varies by commodity Anything combat affects war and civil war
Violent crimes		Down	Down	War and civil war	

Source: an old image found on the Internet ("from BGS stream" according to ED BGS).



Action	boom	bust	unrest	lockdown	famine	out
trade	up	down				
trade_food	up	down			down	
trade_medicines	up	down				dc
trade_weapons	up	down	up			
smuggle	down	up				
smuggle_food	down	up			down	
smuggle_medicines	down	up				dc
smuggle_weapons	down	up	up			
redeem_bounty			down	down		
redeem_combatbond			down			
sell_exploration	up	down			down	dc
murder			up	up		
othercrime			up	up		

Figure 4 An example from the actual developers back in 2016 for some of the actions

<https://www.youtube.com/live/y5DGyG6Qwvk?si=JemkxjuwY5jOvg0j&t=415>

This not a comprehensive list and needs confirmation. To see a full list of potentially known actions versus source and destination effects, please see <https://cdb.sotl.org.uk/missions>

State Duration Table

Slider

State	Pending	Duration	Cool Down
Boom	1	1-∞	0
Bust	1	1-∞	0
Civil liberty	1	1-∞	0
Civil unrest	1	1-∞	0
Investment	1	1-∞	0
Lockdown	1	1-∞	0

Conflict

State	Pending	Duration	Cool Down
Civil war	1	4-7	1
Elections	1	4-7	1
War	1	4-7	1

Event

State	Pending	Duration	Cool Down
Blight	0	1-7	14
Drought	0	Unknown	14
Expansion	5	5-7	14
Famine	0	3-28	14
Infrastructure failure	0	1-∞	14

State	Pending	Duration	Cool Down
Natural disaster	0	Unknown	14
Outbreak	3	3-28	14
Pirate attack	0	Unknown	14
Public holiday	0	2	14
Retreat	1	6	1
Terrorist attack	0	3	14

These values need to be confirmed with Elite Dangerous: Odyssey

Sources: ED BGS Hive mind

<https://novaforce.com/guides/bgs/>

<https://remlok-industries.fr/the-complete-background-simulation-guide/?lang=en>

Conflict table

	Criminals	Autocrats	Corporations	Social
Criminals	War	War	War	War
Autocrats	War	Elections	War	War
Corporations	War	War	Elections	War
Social	War	War	War	Elections

Active States

None

None is the default state. Although it doesn't come with any particular modifiers or bonuses, it is the state that is required to farm certain HGE types, such as core dynamic composites for Federation systems, or Imperial Shielding for Imperial systems, both of which are essential for engineering.

How to get into the None state. If you're lower than None, boost the relevant economic or security sliders. If you're above the None state, reduce the faction by doing negative actions or boosting other factions.

How to get out of the None state. Boost the faction via trade, missions, exploration data, or combat bounties. Or if they are above None, reduce the faction by doing negative actions against the faction, or boosting other factions.

Blight

Blight is where the system is being affected by some form of disease affecting crop yields. Failing to deal with blight will lead to Famine. Food and basic medicine demand goes up, as do prices. If the system is an agricultural economy, food supply is dramatically cut. Agronomic treatment has 20x more demand with a 1.5x price over normal.

How to get into blight. You can't. It just happens. It might be possible to get a system that is in bust to enter blight, drought, or famine given a bit of effort, so try to reduce the economic slider through smuggling, negative trade, and failing donates.

How to get out of blight. Trade agronomic treatments from nearby station markets (not fleet carriers).

Boom

Boom means your faction is doing well. Exploration and trade are thought to be doubly effective as compared to the "None" state. It's very likely that there'll be a supply increase of between 1.7 and 2.4x normal, a dramatic increase in (sell) prices for minerals, an increase in demand, and a change in the demand (buy) price, usually increasing the prices of in demand goods. Boom is a good opportunity to make money with trade loops.

How to get a faction into boom. High-demand trade loops, source and return missions, donate, and drop exploration data. Nearly all following mission types will help extend boom, including group and VIP passenger missions (exploration ones let you double up!), trade (source and return) missions, and donates. If you wish to preserve Boom specifically, then take care not to push the economy slider too high and end up in Investment instead.

How to get a faction out of boom. Any negative economic activity, such as unprofitable trade and smuggling, piracy, take economic missions that target this faction, and if possible, cut off their ability to trade by getting into conflict with the faction and taking the station.

Bust

Bust is where the faction basically can't pay its bills. You must work hard to get out of this state, but the usual levers work just fine.

Demand for narcotics, food cartridges, and liquor rise, supply goes down significantly. Trade loops between bust and boom systems can be highly profitable, as long as there's sufficient supply to make it worthwhile.

How to get a faction out of bust. Buy and sell highly profitable trade in high-demand goods, drop exploration data, and do economic missions, and do the following missions types:

- Assassinate pirate leader (has negative effects for the target faction)
- Cargo transfer illegal drugs (has negative effects for the target faction)
- Hostage rescue (has negative effects for the target faction)

How to get a faction into bust. Smuggling is one of the best ways to get a faction into this state, but any negative economic action will work. Doing the above mission types **to** the victim faction will help maintain the Bust state.

Civil liberty

Civil liberty is the state above "None" on the security slider. It is thought to double the effect of combat bounties and bonds.

How to get into civil liberty. Drop combat bounties, do combat-related missions, and drop combat bonds if in a war zone.

How to get out of civil liberty. Take negative security actions against the faction, such as clean kills, or take combat missions against the faction.

Civil unrest

Civil unrest is the state below “None” on the security slider. Systems in this state have increased chances of piracy. Civil unrest drives demand for narcotics, liquor, beer, non-lethal weapons, personal weapons, but doesn’t significantly change prices.

How to get into civil unrest. Do negative security actions, such as clean kills and violent crimes, take combat missions against the faction.

How to get out of civil unrest. Drop combat bounties, clear weapon fire, pirate, or terrorist USS, take combat missions for the faction.

Civil war

Civil war is a conflict like war, that occurs between two factions of a reasonably similar (but different) ethos (such as cooperatives and communism will go to civil war, not elections).

How to get into civil war. Push together two factions with a reasonably similar (but different) ethos. Civil war occurs mainly between legacy factions that can have two different ethos (such as Corporate Democracies and Democracies). When they cross each other’s influence, a civil war will result.

How to win civil war. Fight the war. Combat bounties, combat bonds, and all security slider activities count. Economic missions, trade, donates, exploration data, do not count.

How to lose civil war. Fight the war for the other side. Combat bounties, combat bonds, and all security slider activities count. Economic missions, trade, donates, exploration data, do not count.

Drought

Drought is a lack of water in a system. Drought dramatically reduces the availability of food and increases prices (if any availability at all). Drought increases demand for grain, fruits and vegetables, water, basic medicines, and increases prices for these goods.

How to get into drought. You can’t, it just happens. But if prolonged, it will lead to infrastructure failure.

How to get out of drought. Deliver water and emergency supplies from nearby systems (not fleet carriers).

Elections

Elections are conflicts that occur between factions of the same ethos, other than anarchies. Anarchies will always go to war.

How to get into elections. Push together two factions with the same government ethos (i.e. both Democracies). When they cross each other's influence, an election will result.

How to win elections. Fight the election with election missions, trade, and donates. Combat bounties and other security slider activities will not count.

How to lose elections. Fight the election for the other side. Combat bounties and other security slider activities will not count.

Expansion

Expansion allows a faction to expand to a nearby system, following the rules set out on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Expansion drives high demand and high prices, which can form a highly profitable trade loop between expansion systems and infrastructure failure systems.

How to get into expansion. A faction that wishes to expand its territory pushes a system above 75%. Once it remains there for a tick, expansion will go pending.

How to get out of expansion. Reduce faction influence by all available means to prevent high influence systems from entering expansion. Once pending, you cannot stop expansion.

How to derail expansion. The only well-known expansion outcome is through having a single expansion target. The game seems to choose a random expansion target on the last day, but it often seems to choose the highest influence system if there are multiple systems with greater than 75% influence. Lower the influence of the system you do not wish to expand from and raise another system (or three) to be higher. This will force squadrons to push themselves down to bring their preferred target back to the top, whereas normally they would have to do no work during expansion.

Famine

Famine is where a faction can't feed itself. Famine is an opportunity to massively boost your faction's influence because there will be support missions in nearby systems, which are also highly profitable. This will likely bring random Commanders to your system, inadvertently helping out.

How to get into famine. Force the eco slider down using the usual mechanisms such as negative trade, smuggling, and missions that target the faction economically.

How to get out of famine. Trade high demand foods and do food related source and return and food donation missions, which should be in abundance. The following missions will help reduce the duration of the famine state:

- Cargo transfer: illegal food
- Passenger: bulk scientists
- Donation: credits for famine
- Donation: food

Infrastructure failure

Infrastructure failure is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing in that it generates a lot of missions such as power on / restore Odyssey missions, and a curse, because the game suggests that trade in

machinery helps shorten the state but doesn't seem to work. During infrastructure failure, the security slider and system influence will take a hit every day, so be prepared to drop bounties.

How to get into infrastructure failure. It's unclear precisely how to enter infrastructure failure, but it is thought that delivering too many combat bounties or bonds (i.e. too many wars in a system involving the faction) may cause infrastructure failure. Try to generate wars to spur on the delivery of mass quantities of combat bonds and bounties.

How to get out of infrastructure failure. Make sure you're regularly boosting the security slider by dropping combat bounties. Take Odyssey power on / restore missions. Trade in high demand machinery from nearby systems (not fleet carriers). Or just wait.

Investment

Boom 2.0. Supply of agronomic treatment and insulating membranes are huge. Demand and prices for painite and a range of other goods is dramatically increased.

How to get into investment. Do positive trade with stations (not fleet carriers), economic missions, and drop exploration data.

How to get out of investment. Negative economic activity, such as unprofitable trade and smuggling, take economic missions that target this faction, and if possible, cut off their ability to trade by getting into conflict with the faction and taking the station.

Lockdown

Lockdown for a controlling faction completely closes down the faction's stations. Every day, a little influence is taken from the controlling faction and spread to the other factions. However, this state has a silver lining. If you are facing a much more powerful adversary, you can put your own faction into this state to slow down negative actions, as the only activity that now works is dropping combat bounties. This means you can spend time on more important systems elsewhere, or counterattack somewhere else.

How to get out of lockdown. The only activity that helps get out of lockdown is to drop combat bounties.

How to force a faction into lockdown. Any negative security activity will push a faction into lockdown. Examples include combat missions targeting the faction, such as assassinate terrorist leader, smuggling or selling illegal weapons (battle weapons and landmines), and attacking Goliaths at Odyssey settlements.

Natural disaster

This rare state occurs very infrequently, often considered to be "FDev Hand of God". Likely though, it's a specialized internal bucket with very unclear triggers. There is insufficient information to really be clear on how this state works.

How to get into natural disaster. You don't. It happens.

How to get out of natural disaster. Do everything – missions, trade, exploration data, drop bounties.

Outbreak

Outbreak, like public holiday and pirate attack, is seemingly random, but is likely to be related to not treating bust in a timely fashion.

How to get into outbreak. It's very unclear. It is likely a side effect of taking missions to deliver biowaste, with the destination faction potentially ending up in outbreak. There's unlikely to be enough of these missions to cause an outbreak. There is some anecdotal evidence that too many bounties and war bonds can also lead to outbreak, but this is untested.

How to get out of outbreak. Take missions that clearly say that they are helping clear outbreak, such as outbreak donation missions, outbreak data courier missions, and more. Bounty vouchers do not work.

Pirate attack

Pirate attacks occur from time to time in a seemingly random time, usually when things are going well. It is thought that positive player actions cause the pirate attack state. During pirate attack, more pirate threat USS appear, and interdictions of trade ships increase. Demand for weapons increases, along with narcotics. Prices for some goods skyrocket as it's riskier to trade in the system.

How to get into pirate attack. Although it is not predictable, we know that more pirates exist when trade is booming, so try to get the system into boom via trade and do not clear the pirate USS.

How to get out of pirate attack. Clear pirate USS, drop combat bounties, take kill pirate lord missions, any action that positively affects the security slider, such trade in legal weapons.

Public holiday

Public holidays occur when things are going well for a faction. Although what triggers it is unknown, it is almost certainly an internal bucket that when triggered causes the public holiday.

How to get into public holiday. Keep the population happy by doing things they want such as missions, high demand trade from other stations (not fleet carriers), exploration data, and combat bounties. These actions may trigger a public holiday. We simply don't know.

How to get out of public holiday. Pull down the economic slider by doing negative actions, such as smuggling, taking negative economic missions target

Retreat

Retreat occurs when a faction's influence falls below 2.5% for a day. Once in retreat, the state is locked in. On the last day of retreat, if the faction is still below 2.5%, they will be forced to leave the system. Retreats have one day pending, and last 6 active days, but only the fifth active day going into the six active day counts, so to avoid retreat, push hard from day 4 onwards – regardless if you're trying to retreat a faction or keep a faction present in a system.

How to get into retreat. Do all negative actions, including violent crimes, clean kills, and take violent combat missions against the faction, such as wet work contracts. Clean killing is the most effective method, but variety is the spice of life.

How to get out of retreat. On the last day, drop combat bounties, do highly profitable trade (if possible), trade and combat missions, and drop exploration data (if possible). As the last day is somewhat random, it might be necessary to push on multiple days.

How to use retreat to take over a system. Retreat is a very special state that has a silver lining – when in retreat you can't end up in conflict, so you can use retreat to zoom straight past all the other factions. If you can get the retreating faction to be more than 60% influence, a coup will occur, which forces a mandatory war (regardless of ethos). This is a high risk move for a small faction with limited BGS resources, but for uncontested systems, it's the fastest way to take over a system.

Terrorist attack

Terrorist attack is the slightly worse version of pirate attack. Security is low in the system. Demand for basic and advanced medicines, survival equipment, and non-lethal weapons goes through the roof, as does buy prices. Buy prices for minerals goes through the floor, so this state can be used to punish refineries and extraction economies.

How to get into terrorist attack. Reduce the security of the system by committing violent crimes and clean kills. Take combat missions against the faction.

How to get out of terrorist attack. Drop combat bounties, do security related missions, clear terrorist USS.

War

War is a conflict that occurs between two factions of a different ethos, including against anarchies. Anarchies will always go to war.

How to get into civil war. Push together two factions with a similar government ethos. Civil war primarily occurs between legacy factions that can have two different ethos (such as Corporate Democracies and Democracies). When they cross each other's influence, a civil war will result.

How to win civil war. Fight the war. Combat bounties, combat bonds, and all security slider activities count. Economic missions, trade, donates, exploration data, do not count.

How to lose civil war. Fight the war for the other side. Combat bounties, combat bonds, and all security slider activities count. Economic missions, trade, donates, exploration data, do not count.

AX States

At the time of writing, the game has no systems in the following states. We cannot test these states, so we will not consider them further.

- Alert
- Invasion
- Control
- Recovery

Defunct States

These states were never implemented, are no longer used by the game, or are so rare as to be untestable. We will not consider them further.

- Cold war
- Colonization
- Historic event
- Incursion
- Infested
- Revolution
- Technological Leap
- Trade war

Super Powers and Powers Discords

Power	Discord	Superpower
Aisling Duval	https://discord.gg/5uejtc4	Empire
Archon Delaine	https://discord.gg/0nLvL0rzijjO2POL	Independent
Arisa Lavigny-Duval	https://discord.gg/h28SG5H	Empire
Denton Patreus	https://discord.gg/RjWn3qv	Empire
Edmond Mahon	https://discord.gg/TXYBjgw	Alliance
Felicia Winters	https://discord.gg/8QjHwMF	Federation
Li Yong-Rui	https://discord.gg/0g95XxxKRcw7ypJZ	Independent
Pranav Antal	https://discord.me/antal	Independent
Yuri Grom	https://discord.com/invite/PEUp2zA	Independent
Zachary Hudson	https://discord.gg/8QjHwMF	Federation
Zemina Torval	https://discord.gg/cj2DgwQ	Empire

Bibliography

Older information

The information in these threads was accurate then and probably still mostly correct.

[Don't Panic: BGS guides and help | Frontier Forums](#)

[AWS re:Invent 2015 | \(GAM403\) From 0 to 60 Million Player Hours in 400B Star Systems](#)

[Join the Elite - Everything You Need to Know About the Background Simulation \(2016\)](#)

Older BGS guides

These guides refer to earlier versions of the game that pre-date fleet carriers, the current crime and punishment system, the new trading system, and Odyssey. They are included here for reference only.

[The Elite Dangerous Background Simulation, Factions and Powers guide - Nova Force](#)

[Remlok Industries » The Background Simulation guide – Elite: Dangerous \(remlok-industries.fr\)](#)