



## Solo RPG Campaigns for the Cepheus Engine



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# Why Solo?

### role-playing game

noun

1.

A game in which participants adopt the roles of imaginary characters in an adventure under the direction of a Game Master.

<u>Dictionary.com's</u> definition of a roleplaying game quite obviously defaults to a tabletop roleplaying game. We all know about live action RPGs, computer RPGs and so on; solo roleplaying is a similar subdivision of roleplaying. It allows a single player to enter a fictional universe, to become embroiled in plots and decision-making and to gain the satisfaction of success and achievement normally associated with traditional table-top play. Why, though, would a player play alone? Roleplaying games have, since their inception, been built around the concept of team-work, of acting within a group, sitting around a table (or more likely these days, a console) to work together in achieving the aims of the game. The reasons for solo play are many:

- **Isolation**. Isolation, either geographic or social. When there are no other players around for miles.
- **Testing**. Testing out the game, becoming familiar with new rules and ideas before beginning table-top play.
- **Backstory**. Creating the past history of a character can be done satisfactorily, through solo play.
- **Old Dogs**. When the game is old and no-one wants to play, you may still want to enjoy the setting, the genre and the challenge.
- **Grown Up**. You move in different circles now that you're all grown up. My own sons are 18 and 21 and though regular gamers, have now left home. However, that doesn't mean to say that the game has to stop.



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# The Solo Approach

Attempts to run a traditional roleplaying scenario as a solo player are fought with frustrations. The referee establishes the situation, how then can the referee (now acting as player) be surprised by plot twists, hidden agendas or random events? Random tables can help to some degree although a number of solo games have been developed over the past decade to try to solve this problem. These are metagames that allow the player to play his or her favourite game - with the solo rules-set providing a campaign framework.

Typically though, these solo metagames must cater for all genres of roleplaying and in trying to cope with an almost infinite number of possibilities tend to the abstract. In this way they are built upon scenes, on keywords and on abstracted words that must be interpreted by the player in order to form a coherent event. Much is left to the players' imagination. A good deal of interpretation is necessary with these abstracted systems, and the author has found himself thinking more about what these random words signify than actually planning out the actions of his character.

Such an approach is not for everyone; on one hand the process requires time and a good deal of thought which in a normal session would be replaced with straight talking, action and a rapid progression through the game. On the other, one could envisage the process of participating in a group roleplay session something of a shared entertainment, with everyone present there to bare witness to the events. "Sure, we never *really* hijacked the starliner and sent it crashing into the pirate base on the moon Nexar 4, but boy we'll all remember that session for a long time to come!" Contrast that with the solo roleplayer who has no-one to share his victories or his clever tactics and ruses with. In this way a roleplay session can be seen as somewhat self-congratulatory, a performance by one-self, to one-self.

Solo sticks to a single genre and to a single game: the Cepheus Engine and the 2D6 SF game that it was derived from. Firstly, this allows us to tailor those event tables, filling them with meaningful events that are instantly understandable. Secondly, we can move away from thinking of the game in terms of scenes, threads, plot points and other more story or screenplay-orientated jargon. Because we're playing a game – with dice – not writing a novel.

Most metagame solo engines keep a very tight focus on the character's actions and try to replicate the types of actions and activities that any table-top group would get up to. Often a system of interrogative questions is used by the player and resolved with dice, cards or cubes. Questions like "Do I have a torch?", "Do the guards spot me?" "Are there any good deals in Drexaar?" imply that a complete situation has already been set up, with many, many, many rolls to get to that point. Too many rolls! Rolling dice doesn't matter so much when you are playing SOLO. What matters



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are the decisions, or the options available, rather than individual dice rolls. You, as the player, provide outcomes (i.e. interesting situations or consequences) once the dice have been rolled.

To do this SOLO pulls back a little from the individual player character and instead focusses on the group. Although the game can be used to run a campaign with a single Cepheus Engine player character, the emphasis is on a group of player-characters. They may be members of a mercenary company, a band of interstellar criminals or bounty hunters, free traders, the crew of an exploration vessel or of a nobleman's private yacht. By determining what the goals of the group are, how they achieve them and what are the consequences of those actions, we skip the details that slow typical solo play down to a snail's pace.

The machine that handles these group activities is the Plan, and it has its own section later in this book. It forms the heart of SOLO. Think of it as one of those 'maths machines' you used at school. You push numbers in at one end, the magic happens inside the box and out pops the completed sum. The Plan essentially does this, with the player providing all of the parameters of the group's actions and what they hope to achieve. A couple of dice rolls later - the Plan mechanic provides the end result. It will even tell you if anyone was injured or killed. So, we, as players don't get to know if Jason remembered his torch, and we don't find out, either, whether anyone was spotted by the guards. The machine just gives us the outcome. The player has to retroactively describe how things got that way. He has to rationalize the outcome and then create two or more options that the player characters may now take. Often, these options will lead in turn, to new Plans.

Now, you may think ... where is the roleplaying? Well, it is still there - it's just that it has moved, from the *end* of the roleplaying process to the *middle*. In traditional table-top RPGs, we as players, say things like ... "I try to sneak behind the door near the back of the bar and hide from the gangster, when he passes by I'll try and hit him on the back of the head to knock him out." The referee tells you your chances, weighing up things like task difficulties, stat modifiers, skills and then factors in the environment ... then you roll the dice. The outcome is either "success, you hide behind the door", or "failure, you're too slow and he spots you and pulls out his handgun." Such 'fortune at the *end*' table-top gaming relies on detailed elaboration and scene-setting by the referee that then enables the players to plan out their moves. Then they roll the dice.

SOLO uses a system called "fortune in the *middle*." Here, some decision making is made, but with very little description of how the player actually achieves his goal. The dice are rolled and the result is retro-actively interpreted. The player can fabricate details, incidents, torches being forgotten ... whatever ... as long as it all explains the outcome. This 'rear-loading' of the task resolution frees the player from having to establish in some detail the surroundings and features around the character, *before* being able to make a decision. There is still some work to do however - the player cannot make a Plan without some information. But he will not have to create guard rotas, building layouts, descriptions of labs or corridors, or how the alarm systems will have to be disabled. It is this shift to fortune in the middle that allows us to roleplay effectively without a referee.





Different types of SF RPG campaign require slightly different types of random table and some require new rules, just to allow the Player to run the game solo. To this end SOLO is split into five major sections. The first covers character generation, the core SOLO rules and the universal random tables. Following on from this first section of chapters are the different campaign chapters, each with its own rules additions, tables and advice. Other types of game are possible, but the following seem to be the most common vehicles for SF roleplaying:

**Campaign: Travellers –** The default style of play, popular since 1977. The player characters are from disparate careers, and have come together to utilise skills learned in the services, they intend to get rich and travel from world to world in search of high-paying patrons, rumours of lost treasures and adventure.

**Campaign: Star Traders –** With a ship in hand, the player characters can start making money by shipping people and cargoes. Often this means they are free traders, plying the routes that big carriers have ignored. Free traders can get into plenty of sticky situations, can earn extra money from infrequent adventures and sometimes operate on both sides of the law.

**Campaign: Naval Officers –** One might think the lack of freedom on a military vessel might put players off running a naval campaign, but when playing SOLO those types of worries do not apply. The PCs are the crew of a naval warship, patrolling the subsector, battling pirates and smugglers and defending the region from other interstellar navies.

**Campaign: Survey Scouts** – Exploration and adventure go hand in hand. In this campaign, the player characters are the crew of a survey ship – far from help or assistance, members of the scout service exploring new planets and sometimes making contact with alien races.

### **Required Resources**

- **Rules**: Cepheus Engine, or your favourite version of the 2D6 science-fiction rules that it is based on.
- Three six-sided dice.
- A lined **notebook**, or a journal or a ring binder filled with lined paper.
- Pens, pencils, erasers, etc.
- Calculator.
- Deck of cards, preferably two decks shuffled together (for the Naval Officers' campaign only).
- **Deckplans** from a sourcebook or internet site.
- Any other sourcebooks or **supplements** suited to your setting.

# Player Characters

To play, the player needs characters. It's always best to create a small group of player characters, even if you intend one of them to be the focus of the game (and of your interest). Having a group of characters means that the player has more options, more skills to utilise and the ability to split his efforts into teams that carry out separate tasks. From the perspective of SOLO, it also means that we get added drama and more plot, simply from the social interactions between the characters. This in itself can drive the game along into new and unexpected directions. This may sound a little unexciting at first, but think how different The Fellowship of the Ring would have turned out if everyone had pulled together and done their duty; likewise with Ridley Scott's movie Alien and J.J. Abram's movie, Star Trek. Arguments, rivalries, long-standing friendships and moments of personal crisis don't just make for added drama and tension, but can spin the narrative off into a completely different direction.

## Inter-Personal Gaming

Inter-personal play can occur not only during intense scenes, where emotions and fears are at their greatest, but also when nothing seems to be happening, perhaps during that long week in jumpspace. If Lisa's past, the past she's running away from by being in space, bubbles up and she tries to take her own like while in jump, that not only has repercussions for that jump and what happens when your ship lands, but also for any time you have to rely on Lisa later on in the solo campaign. Because the actions, reactions and emotions of the player characters aren't truly random, each character has a set of reactions they tap into when they feel the need. In a way this is real life. No-one acts randomly. They display the same social traits, good and bad, wherever they go. And some traits they may never show. This, in a way, gives each PC a 'personality', a set of behaviours and reactions that are unique to that individual, but which the player will learn to recognise and even predict.

## How Many?

How many player characters do you need? It varies. What are you planning to do? A scout/courier can get by with two crewmen, but a subsidized merchant will need at least five – probably six. You may be running a small criminal gang that moves from world to world in search of opportunities ... I'd create three or four for that concept. It's still possible, even advisable, to nominate a primary character, 'your' character, who probably acts as the group's leader. But don't get too attached – you will find that your sympathies may wander to some of the other characters, particularly (as in the case of Lisa) you find new things about them, create extra background and invest a little time in fleshing them out. Only the bare bones of this is done during character creation, in keeping with the 'fortune in the middle' concept, we create details about our PCs later in the game to explain their actions, reactions, achievements and failures. We advise you not to create a single character and attempt to play SOLO with just him or her. You'll be missing out on a lot of dramatic and far-reaching roleplaying if you do. A Character Sheet is included at the back of this book. Print as many as you need.



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## What Do We Do?

Well, this is a science fiction roleplaying game. What do you *want* to do? If a group of table-top gamers can effectively play it out in a campaign, then so can you. SOLO could even act as the campaign 'glue' that binds together a tough military game if you want, although these sets of rules won't include the specific battlefield combat tables you probably need. Here are a few ideas (in no particular order):

**Miners** – The group have a small mining starship or a mining cutter, used to explore a single star system, they are prospectors, hoping to make a big score and salvage anything they find on the way.

**Criminals** – The group all have a smattering of criminal skills and move from world to world, staying one step ahead of the law. Each planet is an opportunity for another scam, heist, robbery or assassination.

**Free Traders** – Making the payments on the old ship keeps everyone focussed on turning a profit, visiting worlds the big merchant cruisers ignore.

**Starmen** – There's more to being in the Imperial Navy than fighting space battles; the crew of a small patrol ship must track down smugglers, pirates, blockade runners, illegal aliens and keep the peace amongst rival corps and traders. Their job doesn't end when they land portside – it just gets tougher!

**Hunters** – With a ship and experience tracking exotic alien wildlife, the player characters are guides, hunters and crewmen working for universities, nobles or government agencies. They may kill their prey, photograph it, or capture it.

**Explorers** – Being the first; the first to land on a planet, to meet alien life and to gaze on unseen vistas. The crew of a scoutship or exploration vessel are out on their own, charting unknown worlds and facing difficult challenges every day.

**Staffers** – The staff of a wealthy noble are a tightly knit group. The PC 'leader' will be the aristocrat, running round the sector on imperial diplomatic and economic business, the group will be his guard, valet and crew of the noble's private yacht.

**Chancers** – The chancers have no ship, but book passage as cheaply as they can, looking for work - for a patron - on each world they stop at. Earl Dumarest, the original Jack of all Trades, would be proud of the chancers.

**Scouting For Danger** – These are chancers with a small ship of their own. They are still looking for work, but now that work must pay for ship fuel and docking fees, too. Of course the jobs they can do now include transport, blockade running – even smuggling!

**Bounty Hunters** – Picking up fresh assignments at the class A and B starports, the bounty hunters can trail a foe over many jumps. The bounty they receive will cover all passage costs, with a nice fat bonus on top.





## **Creating Characters**

Little guidance is needed here. Character creation in the Cepheus Engine and other, similar, games is a pleasure and a solo gaming activity in its own right. If you have lists of NPCs to choose from then you could quite reasonably speed up the process of getting your gaming group together. Personally, however, character creation is something to be enjoyed and the rolling of each character should instead be seen as a prequel to the main event, just as X-Men Origins: Wolverine and X-Men First Class provided some of the backstory to the X-Men superhero group. The trick is to turn the rolling of dice into the creation of a backstory, rather than just the acquisition of rank and skills.

#### Characteristics

At 18 years of age, the characteristics tell us a lot about our character – perhaps more than you might think. The trick is not to be too literal but also not to push the facts too often. There is no universal truth in those numbers, they are suggestions and spurs to imagination, just like the numbers in the Universal World Profile. It might help to understand where the character is coming from if you skip a section to determine his or her homeworld type first.

- **Strength** Strength can represent muscle, size and physical presence. High strength may indicate an intimidating character, without necessarily meaning a huge, stocky physique. Low strength, conversely, may reflect a slight, skinny figure or perhaps one with very little presence a quiet character.
- **Dexterity** Dexterity is associated with agility, co-ordination and speed, but also may indicate self-control and willpower. Low Dex may mean lack of self control, perhaps not just physically, but also mentally.
- **Endurance** Toughness and stamina. Endurance also indicates a pain threshold. Does this indicate a character with a past filled with hard knocks and hard living? Low End may mean a pampered lifestyle, a low tolerance of stress, pain and discomfort.
- Intelligence The classic measurement of logic and problem solving, but one that probably also defines memory, quick-thinking and adaptability. A high Int might indicate high levels of perception and a reader of body language. Low Int might well be indicative of someone oblivious to the subtle signs around them. They may see the world in black and white terms.
- Education Traditionally a measure of book-learning. A high Edu probably indicates a highly educated character that has gone through college and university. But there is more to it than that – Education should include information gathering and general knowledge. Edu should give you an indication of how interesting a PC is to talk to, what kind of a conversationalist he or she is, weaving interesting facts with stories and personal anecdotes. In a way it represents experience that has been absorbed outside of the normal skill system.
- Social Standing A tricky one, Social Standing is technically one's standing in society and probably also one's family. It will help us add to the character's background, however, if we see it as the level of society the PC associates or feels comfortable with. Slum it? Live the high life? Keeping up with the Jones's? These are your connections and the people you have grown up with.

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#### Upbringing

The Background Skills that a character gains, will give you an opportunity to flesh out his or her family background. Of course a character can split those skills up between Primary Education and Homeworld. Either select a homeworld type, or roll once on either Table A or Table B.

Tab	ble A	Та	ble B
1	Agricultural	1	High Population
2	Asteroid/Ice-Capped/Vacuum	2	Industrial
3	Desert	3	Low Technology
4	Fluid Oceans	4	Poor
5	Garden	5	Rich
6	High Technology	6	Waterworld

By determining the type of homeworld the character comes from we can begin to create an upbringing and a backstory than can be filled out a little with those skill choices. Before embarking on your career, you get a number of background skills equal to 3 + your Education DM (1 to 5, depending on your Education score). A skill (level 0) can only be chosen once from both the relevant homeworld skills and the more generic background skills.

**Homeworld Skills**: Growing up on your homeworld gave you skills that depend on the planet's nature. You can select any skill that matches your homeworld's planetary description and trade codes. If you came from a planet already established in the setting, then consult those sources for the planet's description.

**Primary Education Skills:** A formal education gives you a basic level of competence in various sciences and academic disciplines. Any character may choose from the following list:

Admin-0, Advocate-0, Carousing-0, Comms-0, Computer-0, Electronics-0, Engineering-0, Life Sciences-0, Linguistics-0, Mechanics-0, Medicine-0, Physical Sciences-0, Social Sciences-0, Space Sciences-0.

#### **HOMEWORLD SKILLS**

Law Level Skil	
No Law	Gun Combat-0
Low Law	Gun Combat-0
Medium Law	Gun Combat-0
High Law	Melee Combat-0
Trade Code	Skill
Agricultural	Farming-0
Asteroid	Zero-G-0
Desert	Survival-0
Fluid Oceans	Watercraft-0
Garden	Animals-0
High Technolog	y Computer-0
High Populatior	n Streetwise-0
Ice-Capped	Zero-G-0
Industrial	Broker-0
Low Technolog	y Survival-0
Poor	Animals-0
Rich	Carousing-0
Water World	Watercraft-0
Vacuum	Zero-G-0



#### A Career

Once a career has been chosen and the rolling of dice begins, we must take note of how much the rolls for Survival, Commission, Promotion and Re-Enlistment were made by - or failed by. Think what it means to make or fail a roll by a wide margin. If it's a survival roll, then was the character far from the action? What did he or she think about that? How did that occur? If the survival roll was made exactly, then it indicates a death-defying event. What happened? Should the roll be failed then the PC is either killed or, if the player decides, can serve only one half of that term and leave the service injured.

The rolls for commissions and promotions can likewise tell us about the PC. Were the dice rolls barely successful? Were strings pulled? Was someone opposing the advancement? Did some glorious achievement help the character earn the promotion? If one of these rolls was failed badly, what went wrong? And why? Could the PC have done something about it? Or even contribute to his or her own failure?

Re-enlistment determines when the PC leaves the service to join the roleplaying group. If it was failed spectacularly then he or she was forced out for some dramatic reason. What was it? Failing the roll by a single point, however, might mean he was persuaded to go or let go begrudgingly. If he made the roll easily then he or she was probably valued and his career mapped out for him. A roll of double 2 indicates no choice – the PC has to serve another term. Why? Have his superiors got some hold over him? Or does he or she have some personal goal driving them forward through their career?

#### Skills

Skills obviously represent a mix of abilities, informal skills and professional qualifications. The nature and type of skill that a character picks up in a term tells the player something about that character, including perhaps his or her personality and proclivities. Look at a couple of the skills. Why did the PC select *that* skill and what makes the character good at it? Not all the Cepheus Engine skills hold clues like this, but many do.

Skill Level	Experience it Represents			
1	Proficient or qualified to do the job.			
2	Experienced, perhaps with further training.			
3	Expert. Able to teach the skill.			
4	Expert with specialist knowledge and vast experience.			
5	Renowned expert, able to create new techniques and procedures. He or she is 'writing the book' on the subject.			

Mechanics and electronics skills, for example, suggest a clever, technical mind – perhaps a love of problem solving a personal challenges. Administration represents a thorough and logical mind, with an attention to detail that might manifest in other areas of the character's life. Broker skill may indicate a character who is a deal maker, talker, conversationalist, compromiser and peacemaker. What about Carousing? The carouser is a party-goer, but also a gossiper with an ear-to-the-ground, someone who can read the subtle signs of human body language – someone who's probably very easy to get along with. Even something as obtuse as Vacc Suit or Zero-G can be used to glean a few inferences – the character probably

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has good co-ordination and balance might also have adopted a thoroughness in carrying out tasks that is carried into other parts of their life.

Not every skill can provide these hints, and not every skill possessed by a character should. They are simply another place to go to look for prompts, just like characteristics, homeworld and the course of the character's career. Look around for ideas.

#### **Mustering Out**

When playing SOLO it is advisable to try and cut some of the large cash sums handed out during the Mustering Out process. The player could simply reduce any cash bonus by a tenth. This ensures that none of the characters in the group are too affluent-- too affluent to take risks. Poverty breeds a willingness to take risks. You might want to forgo this cull if the group begins the game with a starship, after all that will cost a lot to maintain and the characters can all contribute to its upkeep. If the PCs begin the game still in the service (the Navy, for example or Scout Service) then this cash cull works too – the money they do roll for is simply some of the character's saved wages.

At this point the player should have a completed character. Try to create three significant Life Events for each character, no more. A Life Event is something from the character's past that has an effect in the present game. Creating the fact 'he was a twin brother' is not a Life Event unless extra information is added that has some immediate or near future effect on our character's life - such as, 'he has a twin brother who has set out to ruin the character's reputation'. If you don't have three Life Events at this stage, then move on to the next section, Life Events, where a suitable random event can be picked up.





#### SOLO CHARACTER SHEET

CAMPAIGN TYPE Travellers Naval Officers Star Traders Survey Scouts					MISSION OF THE PC's Reaction Roll:				
	NAME	STR	DEX		Survey Point Total:       INT     EDU       SOC     AGE				
SKILLS		-							
LIFE EVEN	TS								
RELATION	SHIPS								
GEAR	·								
NOTES									
RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS
SKILLS									
LIFE EVEN	TS								
RELATION	SHIPS								
GEAR									
NOTES									

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#### SOLO CHARACTER SHEET



RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS
SKILLS									
LIFE EVENTS									
RELATIONSHIPS									
GEAR									
NOTES									

RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS
SKILLS	SKILLS								
LIFE EVEN	TS								
RELATIONSHIPS									
GEAR									
NOTES									



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#### Example: Cassander Novo

We will go through the character generation process now, rolling randomly to create a suitable PC for our SOLO group. All we have is a name, Cassander Novo.

#### Cassander Novo

Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Endurance 6, Intelligence A, Education 6, Social Stg. 7

Cassander seems fairly average, although his Intelligence is quite high. I roll on Table B (above) to determine the type of homeworld he came from in the hope of a hint. Low Technology worlds are pre-Atomic and pre-computing, providing the option of receiving Survival skill. He gets 4 points to spend on Background Skills – we choose Survival-0, Mechanics-0, Electronics-0, Physical Sciences-0 and Admin-0, figuring that he was part of a Technical clan on some steam-age , backwater planet. He would certainly be clever enough for this type of work.

Once off-world he manages to join the merchants easily. In Term 1 his survival roll was a close one, perhaps his ship crash-landed and Cassander survived without injury. However, he comfortably makes both his commission and promotion rolls. At age 22 he is a Fourth Officer on the ship. Unfortunately he is not kept on, failing his re-enlistment roll! What happened? Let's look at the skills he gained for clues:

Cassander gains Steward 1 on enlistment, this involves the care of passengers and the loading of cargo. He is a 'deckhand'. His first skill is Broker, so Cassander does not follow his homeworld talents to become a technician or engineer, instead he takes part in trading and negotiations. Perhaps he has a big mouth or the 'gift of the gab'. We can envisage a free trader on some wild frontier world - with negotiations breaking down - when Cassander steps in and inadvertently seals the trade deal. He is commissioned and after learning another level of Broker becomes a Fourth Officer and the ship's primary deal-maker.

At some point there is a crash that Cassander barely survives. The nature of his final skill roll seems to close the circle – it is Navigation. Now an officer, with watch responsibilities, he is taught Navigation. It is during one of these early navigation duties that the ship strikes an asteroid, resulting in several fatalities. His promising career in the merchant service is cut short and he is forced out to end up ignominiously seeking work with the player's group. From the Mustering Out procedure, the character gains Cr5,000. Do we have Life Events?

- 1 He was responsible for the destruction of his free trader ship (secret).
- 2 He is reckless, and relies on talking his way out of a problem.

3 – Nothing else springs to mind, so we roll on the Life Events Table (below) and find out that a friend, relative or lover was killed. Now surely this has got to be during the starship incident! We decide that the captain's brother, also a starship captain, suspects that Cassander was at fault. He wants revenge. Cassander doesn't know this, however.

Cassander, at the end of character generation, now looks like this:

Fourth Officer Cassander Novo 676A67 Age 22 1 Term Cr5,000 Broker 2, Navigation 1, Steward 1, Mechanics 0, Electronics 0, Physical Sciences 0, Survival 0, Admin 0



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#### Life Events

Each entry on the following Life Event Table serves as a hook for a player character that can be used to add tension, or a plot complication.

#### D66 In the Past You ...

- 11 Made a terrible mistake, and fear repeating that mistake.
- 12 Were responsible for a mission/deal ending badly. It tainted your career.
- 13 Fell in love, but your lover (1-2) died, (3-4) vanished or (5-6) turned against you.
- 14 Were forced to take part in an immoral mission or duty. Your actions still haunt you.
- 15 Should have stood up to a powerful figure. You always regret not doing so.
- 16 Made an enemy. It's your fault, you shouldn't have ... (what?)
- 21 Learnt something you shouldn't know you fled for your own safety.
- Had to create a new identity for yourself. But why?
- A rival forced you into bankruptcy it's amazing you made a come-back at all.
- 24 A terrible crime was committed against you. It haunts you still.
- 25 Reconnected with a childhood friend.
- 26 Profited from a dirty secret and owe any promotion or money to that secret.
- 31 Fled your homeworld devastated by plague, war, famine or asteroid strike.
- 32 You have an addiction, but no-one knows about it.
- 33 Made a deal with a crime-lord you couldn't decline.
- 34 Made a good friend and long term contact.
- 35 Found fame after becoming involved in a well known news event. Some people are jealous, others indifferent most are impressed.
- 36 Realized your parents hate you. Why?
- 41 Fell in love. It ended badly due to (1-2) family, (3-4) romantic rival or (5-6) circumstance.
- 42 Were responsible for the death of a relative, friend or lover.
- 43 Make a powerful friend in the military or government.
- 44 Imprisoned for a crime you did not commit, you would love to clear your name.
- 45 Carried out a secret task for your bosses, but you were rewarded.
- 46 Got married. Today you are (1-2) divorced, (3-4) widowed or (5-6) still happy!
- 51 Helped your boss out. Now he owes you a great favour.
- 52 Were never told about your origins; what surprises will this throw up?
- 53 And your family were ruined by a petty official, now a senior executive.
- 54 Turned an old enemy into a close friend and ally.
- 55 Fell in love with a professional rival. The affair flips between passion and rivalry.
- 56 Were caught up in political turmoil. You are either a hero (1-3) or villain (4-6)
- 61 Make a powerful enemy in the military or government.
- 62 Saved someone's life and gain them as a contact.
- 63 Were betrayed by a close friend. Today you are (1-2) deadly enemies, (3-4) rivals or (5-6) do not speaking to each other.
- 64 Were helped in a time of terrible crisis by a friend. He/she is a contact.
- 65 Got into a huge amount of debt equal to 1D6 x Cr20,000.
- 66 Suffered amnesia, something bad happened to you but your memories are vague.

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Z O L O

# Character Reactions

A fully fleshed out group of player characters is essential for an interesting and entertaining solo game, it adds a level of unpredictability and dynamism that gives each encounter or event a more three dimensional and immersive feel to it. A PC is a collection of skills and characteristics, along with a little backstory and three interesting Life Events. However, crucial for some entertaining SOLO play is a PC's relationship with his comrades. These bonds of friendship, hatred or mistrust really add spice to an event when PCs must, of necessity, work together. It certainly gives the player a good idea of how the PC will act and respond.

The Player should create a link for every PC with one *other* PC. Start with the PC at the top of your list, then roll on the Relationship table to define the type of relationship it is (some are good, some are bad, others are more complicated ...). Next, determine which other PC this relationship involves: roll randomly or select a suitable PC from your list. The author typically does a bit of both.

## PC Relationship Table

- 11 Bickers
- 12 Secretly in love
- 13 Secretly hates
- 14 Competitive rival
- 15 Blames for a past event
- 16 Blames for a past event
- 21 Knows a dark secret
- 22 Ignores or ridicules
- 23 Good friends
- 24 Good friends
- 25 Life-long friend
- 26 Hatred and constant arguing
- 31 Admires
- 32 Secretly jealous
- 33 Openly jealous
- 34 Dependent on another PC's support
- 35 Old (and these days, ex-) friends
- 36 Share a secret past incident

- 41 Sexual partner
- 42 Sexual partner
- 43 Married couple
- 44 Divorced due to past incident
- 45 Divorced over differences
- 46 Related (and on good terms)
- 51 Related (but feuding or cold)
- 52 Life-long friend
- 53 Secretly related (only one knows)
- 54 Loner
- 55 Competitive rival
- 56 Inseparable buddies
- 61 Secretly in love
- 62 Friendship through guilt
- 63 Hatred and constant arguing
- 64 Knows a dark secret
- 65 Enemy waiting for chance to strike
- 66 Roll again, but it's all an act. Why?

Cassander's relationship roll throws up a 1 and 4 – secretly in love. This is with Lisa Lao. When we roll for his team-mate Vilius, we get a 2 and a 6 – he hates (and argues with Lisa Lao). Lisa Lao, the pilot and driver is diced for with a result of 5 and 2 – another PC is a life-long friend. We will assume this is Helena Jackson, the other woman on the team. Rolling for Helena, we find that results of 2 and 1 indicate that she knows a secret about a PC – let's say Vilius' secret about his own expulsion for the Navy.

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### In-Game Reactions

In-Game Reactions and the random table that follows, recognizes that although a player character may be happy with a goal like 'wants to find his father' or 'wants revenge on the crime syndicate' and so forth, in a game that has PCs trapped on a starship or at a starport or on a remote alien landing site, how they react to each other has far more relevance.

Using a 2D6, the Reaction Table can provide a response from the character in times of stress, fear or at random moments during the adventure (the reason for such a reaction, in this case, would then be created by the Player). I typically roll for a single randomised player character during jump, when waiting around for something, or during times of indecision or stress. What better time to have an argument, when no-one can get the airlock open to expose the ship to vacuum and extinguish the onboard fire?! The various campaign types may also call for Reaction Rolls at certain times.

#### To Avoid a Bad Reaction: 8+

This default is the for most groups. Successfullv rollina this target number indicates that everyone on the team held their nerve (or their tongue!) and there were no emotional outbursts. Fail the roll and whatever is happening in-game suddenly becomes dominated by a player character outburst. Select a suitable PC or roll randomly (I do a little of both based on the current situation, and on any previous arguments or relationships). Note that you might want a higher or a lower number. The crew of Ridley Scott's ship, the Prometheus, seemed like a squabbling bunch and probably had a Reaction roll of 10+. Conversely, Star Trek's Enterprise crew all seemed to get along fabulously and probably had a Reaction roll of 5+. Conflict is great for storytelling, however, so set your Reaction roll to 8+ or higher.

Someone has a bad reaction. We know who. What are the details? Use this Reaction table. Have an idea beforehand of which PC this concerns, either from the characters involved in the current situation, or randomly. Any one of the following reactions may upset a Plan or skill roll, or disrupt the flow of the game in other ways.



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#### 1D6

#### **Character Reaction**

- 1 **Seeks Solace**. The PC is overcome by guilt, fear loneliness, remorse or simply retreats to a regular addiction. Drugs or alcohol may be used (but not necessarily) and the PC will withdraw, both physically and socially, perhaps threatening the mission at hand. A PC with Liaison, Carousing or a decent Edu score might be able to make a skill roll to help the PC, or else the Player can roleplay this out.
- 2 **Panic/Anxiety**. Something is eating at the character, and rather than withdraw or seek solace, the PC displays their anxiety and panic. They can't get much done and may even pose a danger to others if not handled well. What is causing the anxiety? It depends on the situation.
- 3 **Looses Temper.** The situation has gotten to the PC who vents their anger at everyone around them. This is different to an argument everyone gets it this time! Exactly what has triggered this bout of bad temper depends on the current situation.
- 4 **Stubborn.** A choice has been made and the PC does not like it. They refuse to co-operate unless things are changed. This may not be the result of a large ego, but a passionate belief, a sense of safety or moral duty. It all depends on the current situation.
- 5-6 **Argument with another PC.** There is a blazing row. Perhaps it is the culmination of a period of rivalry or jealousy, or based on a grudge. Other PCs may get involved and choose a side, if they have ties with one of those arguing.

Perhaps the player decides that Cassander and another team-mate, Vilius, are sent to stake out the starport office as a Plan of action. They are to wait for an employee to finish his shift so they can follow him home. While they're waiting, the player decides to roll a Reaction check, perhaps they argue while they wait. He rolls 5, which is short of the 8+ 'saving throw' and then rolls again to determine the PC who has the reaction. It is Vilius, and he has an argument with Cassander, probably about the futile nature of the plan. The Player decides that this is enough of a distraction to result in a -2 on the Plan's required roll.

Care must be taken not to roll for a reaction all the time. It is best used during periods of boredom (to liven up a week in jump!) or during periods of crisis, tension or drama.

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## Why Bother With Character Relationships?

Chewed down to its bare bones, a solo RPG is a set of random rolls, with some player choice added in. Using the 'fortune in the middle' approach of task or scene resolution (as described in The Solo Approach chapter), the onus is on the player to pull together whatever dice results, information and inspiration he can to explain the results of an important dice roll. Character reactions, Life Events and inter-character relationships provide a constant source of ideas in this regard. It provides the player with a bank of motivations and behaviours that explain why certain things went the way they did. It helps along the solo play.

## Can Relationships Change Over Time?

Just as in real life, relationships should change over time and as the game progresses. There is no established mechanic for this, however, since it is through the Player interpreting situations and explaining events that relationships might improve or worsen or even spring out of nowhere! Read the Example of Play (2) to see how Kuta's bitter relationship with Myla develops. There may come at time in the campaign when her feelings of jealousy spill out into actions against Myla, or, there maybe an incident during a mission where they are forced to work together and do rather well. The Player might want to make a Reaction roll at this point, and if there is peace, could conclude that the two women have become tentative friends. This section sets up the initial social situation, ready for roleplaying to take-over. Charting these shifting relationships throughout a campaign is half the fun.



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# The Plan

The heart of SOLO is The Plan, essentially a *scene* resolution mechanic, rather than the more typical *task* resolution mechanic. In a game without a referee it becomes difficult to establish the hundreds of little facts that are needed to roleplay through a scene. There is no-one to interrogate, and although some more abstract solo games use a faux referee mechanic, whereby tables and dice can be interrogated for further information and scene setting, SOLO dispenses with the idea altogether.

Essentially, the player acts almost as a team captain, a commander who stands back from the action and just lets the characters get on with it. They are experienced and intelligent people who know the world and the rules that govern it – let them get on with the mission themselves. Let's say that the game calls for the player's group of PCs to rescue a wealthy heiress from a remote coastal villa owned by gangsters on a waterworld. They have a patron, the woman's father, who is paying them handsomely for the job and providing a little information on the villa and the girl's situation, as well.

## What is a Plan?

A Plan is a single dice roll to figure out 'how it all went' and can easily involve half a dozen PCs and several hours of in-game time. All the player has to do is establish what the Plan will be. Which PCs will go out to the villa and how will they get there? What do they do? Are there any contingency plans? If the gang-lord's henchmen start shooting, can the PCs defend themselves? Is there an escape plan? The Plan should run to three or four sentences. Next the player looks dispassionately at his new plan and gives it an honest rating for success. He can choose between 'shaky', 'solid' and 'fool proof'. The Plan might well be good, but the odds stacked against them. Or ... there is just no easy way to achieve the mission goals. Be realistic – be honest. Finally the player needs to decide whether the mission is 'safe' (no-one can really get hurt) or 'dangerous' (injury or death is possible). Consider the rescue of the heiress – here is the Player's Plan:

PLAN: Stage a night-time commando raid using two speedboats. All the PCs will be going, and everyone will be armed. Everyone will also carry knock-out gas and gas masks, too. As they move through the villa the plan is to lob gas canisters ahead of them. Once the girl is located, she can be carried to the boats. Shaky (10+) Dangerous

Obviously this mission is classified as 'dangerous'! As regards the Player's success chance, he knows it isn't fool proof, and to be honest, it isn't solid, either. If they lose the element of surprise the villa's guards could overwhelm them. He decides it is shaky. Oh dear. A shaky, dangerous mission is a bad combination.





What could the player do differently? Well, put simply, try another plan! One of the PCs might have Streetwise skill, perhaps he or she can make contact with the gangster through other channels and set up a meeting about some unrelated business *at the villa*. Or the player could pose as a mediator, offering to trade the heiress for some commodity the gang lord wants – and turn the meeting into an ambush. Or … the player's Plan might involve luring the gang-lord and his cronies away from the villa whilst a few PCs slip in and unshackle the heiress. Each Plan has a different level of inherent danger and a different chance of success.

## Resolving the Plan

Because the player is essentially running a team of player characters he can let them get on with it, and should not feel obsessively protective about a single character. Roll the dice, see what the consequences are and move on ...! To some Players it may seem as if we are not just throwing away all of the roleplaying opportunities, but we are also skipping through the most exciting parts of the game. This is not the case. That single roll may sum up the actions of several characters during an intense and action-packed scene, but there is still tension and great chances to roleplay. It's just that it all comes *after* the roll. The roll to resolve a Plan is quite straight-forward:

### 1 - Decide on the difficulty of the Plan:

Difficulty Rating	Description	Required Roll
Shaky	Quite a few things could go wrong.	10+
Solid	Most eventualities catered for.	8+
Fool proof	Almost nothing can go wrong.	6+

### 2 – Decide on the Plan's danger level:

Danger Level	Description
Safe	Little if any physical danger exists.
Dangerous	There is chance of physical injury, even death, if things go wrong.

### 3 – Roll 2D6 to resolve the Plan:

Roll Equal to or Over the REQUIRED ROLL Dice Modifiers: +1 for a PC with a significant skill +1 for use of a crucial piece of kit or a great asset -1 for a PC unsuited to the mission

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## Consequences – What Happened?

The dice roll is made and the mission is either a success or a failure. But there is more to it than that. The player will have more questions. Did anyone get injured? Was anyone killed? Did they leave any evidence behind? Was some vital clue picked up, despite the failure of the mission goals? These kinds of questions would not arise in a table top RPG because they would have emerged naturally through game-play. We dispensed with the game-play – but we still need the answers to these questions!

The more difficult the Plan is to complete, the more chance a Bad Consequence will follow. Easier Plans (Fool proof, for example) are more likely to throw up Good Consequences. These consequences add a little more randomness to the mix, as any roleplayer knows, no plan survives contact with the enemy and improvisation is almost always required. Normally it is the fiendish referee who throws a spanner in the works to trip up a well-designed plan, but here, without a referee to add that kernel of tension, we resort to the Consequences Roll. Roll 2D6 for the possible consequences of a mission, *whether or not* it was successful. Compare the roll to the Plan's Required Roll.

- If UNDER, there is a bad consequence.
- If EQUAL or OVER, there is a good consequence

**Bad Consequences:** Whether the mission succeeded or failed, something bad happened along the way. Often this piece of bad luck will suggest itself, based on the situation at hand. If not, then try rolling 2D6 to come up with a random disaster; +2 if the Plan was a success.

2D6	Bad Consequence
2-4	Death
5	Serious Injury
6	Minor injury
7	Trapped, lost or delayed
8	Part of the mission was failed or incriminating evidence left behind
9	Damage to a useful or valuable piece of kit
10	Seriously upset or antagonise an NPC
11-12	The task takes four times longer than planned

**Good Consequences:** The mission may have failed, or even succeeded, but something good came out of it nonetheless: a useful bit of information, a rumour, extra money was made, tracks were covered, an interesting contact was made, a unique piece of kit was picked up, or some other bonus. Nothing amazing, you understand, just a little extra. Often this piece of good luck will suggest itself, based on the situation at hand. If not, then try rolling 2D6 to come up with a random boon; +2 if the Plan was a success.





#### 2D6 Good Consequence

- 2-5 The task took half the expected time
- 6 Tracks covered, no evidence left behind
- 7-8 Hear a rumour or discover a valuable piece of information
- 9-10 Find a useful or valuable piece of kit
- 11-12 Make a Contact or friend

**Example:** The rescue attempt on the coastal villa was a shaky proposition and certainly dangerous.

Let's roll the dice to see how it was resolved. I need 10+, but I award the team a +1 for the use of knock out gas and gas masks, which I think the gangsters certainly won't be expecting. I roll 4+5 = 9, +1 = 10. Success! I get the girl out of the villa, on to the speedboats and away. But are there any consequences? The Required Roll was 10. I roll 5+3 = 8 for the consequences, which is under the target and a bad consequence. What went wrong? I think about this... part of the mission cannot really be failed, since the girl is either rescued or not. There is no expensive kit that could be lost. But certainly the team could leave behind a few clues to their identity, which could result in trouble later on in the game - we go with that. If nothing had sprung to mind, I might have rolled on the Bad Consequences table (with a +2).

### Explanations

We called this method of scene resolution, 'fortune in the middle' and because of that the player now has to explain what happened in the resolution of the plan. He or she can go in to as much or as little depth as they want. But the main points need to be covered. Write a quick summary of the events.

Everything went as planned, the team broke in and used the tear gas to knock out the gangsters. They wounded the gang lord in a stand off with the girl, but she was rescued and dragged unconscious back to the boats. One of the gunmen shot up a speedboat, but everyone escaped unharmed. Unfortunately, surveillance cameras picked up on the fact that they were off-worlders. The gang lord is going to find out who they are if he can, using his men who work at the starport.

If someone had been injured or killed, the player makes the decision about which PC suffered, or he can roll a dice – make it random. If kit was lost or destroyed (in this instance it could have been one of the speedboats) then again the player decides which piece of kit suffers. The most dramatic result is *always* the best one!

Explanations of how the Plan was resolved are not really optional – they are the roleplaying, the drama, the most exciting bits of the game. This is where we explain what happened so that it matches the results thrown up by the dice roll. Your imagination goes to town, almost as if you are the referee in a table-top RPG narrating events to a player, pulling all the threads of a completed scene together so that everyone sat around the table is on the same page. You can throw anything into the mix here as long as it makes sense, adds to the drama and is believable. Like a referee, have an eye on the future and really exploit those consequences, each one could possibly lead to another dramatic situation or another session of roleplaying. Refer to the following chapter, Write It Down for more advice on recording the results of the Plan.





#### What Next?

Every completed Plan should end with at least two options, two courses of action which the player can choose from. Force yourself to make up two different options, This can sometimes be hard, but it gives you something to weigh up and decide upon and it actually helps to push the game into new directions.

The team rescued the heiress, the mission was a success, and now the player has to create two options for the player characters to take. The player really just wants the PCs to jump into their ship and head off to the next world. But he carefully considers two options:

- 1. Follow up the rumour of an interesting cargo on a remote island chain.
- 2. Agree to take the heiress off-world and hide her on a neighbouring planet.

Note that the player gets what he wants - both options lead to a trip off-world, but simply add in an extra step that includes more possibilities for drama and adventure, if not immediately (in the case of mission 2) then at some point in the future. Since the PCs are also the crew of a cargo ship, option 1) might be a stock response that always has potential to lead to new problems, new opportunities, new dramas and new contacts. For players wanting to play a more structured solo free trader campaign, read the later chapter entitled Star Trader, where these adventure options are available, instead, as events on a randomised table.

Once the options have been created, one of them can be pursued. Book-keeping will probably be carried out at this point to address injuries and healing, lost kit, new purchases and any bills that need paying.

## Try This Exercise

Have a go at creating Plans for the following three situations. I will provide my own Plans at the end, as a comparison. The PCs are the crew of a free trader that has just landed at a frontier starport on a primitive jungle world. Can you write a short Plan for each, somewhere around three sentences in length? Remember to decide how dangerous your Plan is and provide a realistic assessment of its viability.

#### The Three Situations

**Situation 1** – On landing the crew discover the fusion drive requires a crucial part to lift off again. Waiting for a part off world will take up to two months and the E-type starport has nothing like it. However a private, corporate landing station 20 km away in the jungle almost certainly *does* have a stock of fusion drive parts. They will refuse out-right any requests to purchase such a part. How will the PCs acquire the needed part from that corporate warehouse?

**Situation 2** – One of the crew has been detained by the local alien tribe for committing some minor crime. The tribe own and run the primitive starport and will be responsible for fueling and cargo loading – it cannot be insulted or offended. How do the PCs plan to get their navigator back?





*Situation 3* – An off-world hunter hires the PCs to find his comrade who has gone missing in his helicopter 100km north of the starport. He offers Cr1000 for a three day search, with a Cr2000 bonus for his return. Assuming they take the job, what will be the Plan?

#### My Plans

**Situation 1** – My instinct is to conduct a burglary. I would hire a local alien tribesman to take the Captain out by foot to scout out the complex, take video and make maps. Then I would have the crew travel by air/raft at night and try a break in, perhaps with some kind of diversion. Maybe I could have a couple of crewmen in the jungle, just outside the main gates, shooting off firearms to bring any security out... I'd rate this Plan as Solid (8+) due to the diversion and recon attempt, but it could easily be Dangerous. Even now, as I write this Plan, I am thinking ... what if the PCs find something else in the storeroom of this secret corporate installation... good or bad depending on the flavour of the consequence rolled. Now that would be mighty interesting, wouldn't it?

**Situation 2** – This Plan needs to be more subtle. Will a good bribe work? What do the tribal leaders want? Can the crew hire a local to guide them? I can't decide, I need more information, so I roll the D6: this will tell me, on a scale of 1 to 6, how serious the bribe or favour is going to have to be to free the crewman (so it also tells us how severe his transgression was!). I roll a 2, that's not so bad. Maybe they want some modern technology, a couple of guns or a water purifier. But I've got my cruel referee's head on, even now, and I figure that a lot can get lost in translation between species. Perhaps the PCs find they have agreed to something unexpected, like taking on the alien chief's son as a deckhand. That would be a Bad Consequence I suppose, a twist that is inspired by one of the old Sinbad movies, perhaps the Golden Voyage (1973). This Plan is not elaborate, I'd rate it as Solid (6+) and Safe. If there is a Bad Consequence, then the Captain is forced to accept a young TL 1 alien tribesman as a deckhand!

**Situation 3** – Of course my crew is going to attempt a rescue! I set up a search grid, using a team in the air/raft to criss-cross the jungle and search for signs of the downed chopper. I give them binoculars, infra-red goggles (to see heat through the canopy) and a multi-band radio to try and pick up any signals from the victim. My Plan is Shaky (simply because of the hit and miss chances involved in a wilderness rescue) but Safe. I give the PCs a +1 for the different sensor methods they have with them.

How did our Plans compare? I must admit my method of securing that spare engine part was a little 'illegal' but many of my old Traveller games tended to the questionable end of the spectrum. Your Plan probably had a more legal outcome! The corporate security guys have guns, but would they automatically open up on our burglars? Would you rate the task as Dangerous or Safe? I figured that burglars would probably be shot-on-sight at a secret installation – hence my decision to classify it as Dangerous.



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# Write It Down

A number of methods were tested to track the fortunes of the player characters and record the progress of events during the play-testing of this game. A monthly 'chronicle sheet' with various boxes to be filled in was quickly consigned to the bin as ideas, notes, chance encounters, extra plots and sub-plots spilled out of the boxes and across the page. What was needed instead was a diary-type recording method so that all of the different types of operations, events and encounters that could occur could be recorded.

One may ask, when no-one is actually going to read this diary: why bother? The answer to that involves the fundamental difference between playing a table-top game with a group of friends and playing alone. In traditional gaming once an action is declared: 'I shoot the king!' - then it happens, it is now a fact and cannot be 'undone'. In a game occurring in one person's head there is no declaration of actions. Just when do you make the jump to the next system, if you forgot something can you pretend it didn't happen and do that bit again? Writing everything down serves two purposes. Firstly it acts as a declaration of action. Once written in ink it cannot be revoked. Secondly, when a game comes to a sudden stop, it helps the player pick up where he last left off.

The recommended form of recording, then, is an unstructured diary. A lined notebook would serve in this capacity, with subheadings to section off various changes of scene. Financial calculations can be made directly on to the page where they will be used for later reference. Specific dates and times are worth recording, they will form the framework for the rest of the scenes, the descriptions and encounters. The game entries should be filled with relevant facts – leave out irrelevancies. Stick with locations, NPCs, mission plans and outcomes, options, costs and so forth. I often add little details about the world the PCs are on, perhaps a hotel stayed at, or an interesting site visited – in case they visited the planet again. We are travellers who travel - fleshing out each world with unique customs, cities, landscapes and creatures is what attracted many of us to science-fiction roleplaying in the first place. Each visit to a planet, and each mission or session set on that planet is an opportunity to create some new fact, NPC, vehicle, animal or location that can then be used again and again.

In a similar vein I usually invent names for gangs, corps, starships – anything that crosses the PCs' path and that might crop up again. Rather than bury these important elements within the depths of the diary, I list them at the back of the book, each type of encounter on its own page where they can be easily referenced. Set up the following pages at the back of your diary:



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**Contacts** – These are patrons, friends, allies and contacts – people on your side. **Enemies** – These are individuals, gangs and corporations, etc, who wish you ill. **Other NPCs** – Those non-player characters who are neutral (for now!) **Other Groups** – Those corps, governments, gangs, etc. who are neutral (for now!) **Starships** – While most starship encounters are not noteworthy, some certainly are. If so, record the name of the starship here, along with any other details. If the PCs stay within a single subsector, they will inevitable meet the starship again. **Storylines** – You will need a page or two for Storylines – more on those, later.

Roleplayers familiar with the old blue-booking technique should be at home here. Bluebooking entered the roleplaying world with the release of the Strike Force supplement for Champions, back in 1988. As described in that book, the technique's name came from blue notebooks that each of the writer's players used to record thoughts and notes about what their characters were doing *in-between* gaming sessions. This technique helped roleplaying campaigns that used the technique to feel more alive. In those pre-internet, pre-email, pre-wiki days, all of this was done by writing in journals, with good old-fashioned pen and paper. Sometimes this would be done alone, away from the other players in isolation, at other times the referee and player might get together to run an informal one-on-one game session to resolve some personal drama, and the results would be written down, adding even more to that character's backstory.

These written asides from the main tabletop RPG sessions were designed to shed light on the down-time of a player character, to follow a moment in the life of a minor NPC, or examine what was happening back at the villain's HQ. Most often, though, they helped to really flesh out the backstory of a player character.

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#### Session: 3/1/17

Ninshien D4A2634-A NonIndustrial

Ninshien – methane world. Home to Lisa Lao just after dome tragedy. Belter Helena is here with friends to take her off world. Government keen to investigate and charge her! Starport locked down. They will have to use an ATV to cross the harsh surface to reach a starship at a refuelling base near a methane lake. Pursued by local security in ATVs. <u>PLAN</u>!Cassander will break into a hanger to steal an ATV. Lisa will drive everyone to the starship.

PLAN: SOLID (8+), DANGEROUS +1 Lisa driving +1 Ship waiting for them

Security roll (Law Level or less) 4 - no problem, get to hanger fine. Roll for the Plan: 11, easily make it! Good consequence – let's say ship captain sympathetic. Make a contact. 400-ton Frontier Trader called 'The Explorer'

Jump: Ninshien to Mazandaran

Pre-Jump. Starship Encounter Roll – Military ship, an 800-ton Mercenary Cruiser 'Lucifer'. Asks for sensor log. All OK.

In Jump. Navigator on The Explorer has a personal crisis. Captain asks Lisa to help (she has Liaison 2). Depressed. Says he should have spoken out in asteroid belt 29 Persei, about mass killing by tyrannical mining boss. Took a bribe instead. Lao makes skill roll. Double 2. Oh no! Navigator commits suicide! Captain shocked. Offers Novo navigator's job for 4 jumps. PCs get free passage.

## <sup>2</sup>Cs: Contacts & Enemies

The existence of other active and goal-orientated agencies, both individuals and groups, brings the SOLO game to life. The universe is inhabited and sometimes it pushes back, turning the life of the player characters into a struggle. Contacts are generally on the side of the PCs, they are supportive: friends, contacts and allies. Enemies oppose the PCs, they may include individuals, organisations, corporations, societies, official agencies, starship crews, gangs and so on. The level of antagonism that the Enemy display will vary - make notes that explain just what this Enemy will do to thwart the PCs. Are they trying to kill the player characters? Embarrass them? Are they street-level low life's who hold a grudge and report their movements to a local gang lord? Is it a rival ship captain who dimply tries to swipe the best cargoes before the characters can get to them?

Contacts and enemies are not handed out to characters upon character generation, instead they are 'collected' by the PC group and recorded in a list at the back of the diary.

## Where Do They Come From?

The random encounter tables are littered with Contacts and Enemies. A patron offering a job may become an ally if the mission went well. A starship captain given aid in assistance in deep space may also become a valuable friend. Other opportunities to make useful contacts and friends are found on the tables. If an ally suggests itself, make a note.

Enemies are not as frequently encountered on the random tables, but they can nevertheless be met, or more usually, created ... created by the PCs themselves. If that mission the patron was so pleased about upset someone's plans, then they may try to take their revenge on the PCs. There will be plenty of opportunities to compete or oppose some NPC within the game universe. Sometimes even turning a blind eye can create Enemies. If a ship encounter calls for assistance from the PC's vessel, but the player decides to press on and ignore it, then he might consider rolling a single die to check on repercussions. Perhaps on a 1 or 2 a catastrophe ensued, and guess who the survivors will blame? This type of spot, player-inspired, random roll is explored more thoroughly in the later chapter titled Random Rolls.

## How Are They Used?

Simply put, Contacts and Enemies turn random rolls into plot. The emphasis in SOLO is on a discrete section of space - a subsector is perfect - within which repeated encounters, exchanges, arrangements and relationships can form. When a Naval patrol detects he player's blockade running scout craft, it will most likely not be some random never-met-before ship, but instead a named vessel that has crossed paths wit the PCs before. Likewise, if a patron asks the PCs to steal valuable blackmail data from the office of a business tycoon, the player may well equate that tycoon with the corporate boss from two sessions earlier who tried to have the PCs kicked off a space station. The player is the 'intelligence behind the story', he makes





the connections, relates one event to another, he equates a new NPC with an old one. He creates plots by lining up the random events into a coherent pattern. Of course this technique can easily be over-used, it could degenerate into a farce if the same NPC faces and starships turn up in every game session. The key is to equate one NPC element with another from the Player's diary list, but **only when it will enhance the dramatic**.







# Storylines

In the previous chapter, we talked about the way in which NPCs can act as dramatic tools to help bind random events together, turning something that might appear to be a discrete series of events into something resembling a plot line. These 'Storylines' should be recorded as soon as the player begins to create them. A Storyline list should be added to the back of the game diary. Give each entry plenty of space, you might want to add further details as the story progresses during game-play.

## What is a Storyline?

Again, referring to the use of Contacts and Enemies, it is the way in which the player tries to make sense of random events by hanging on them an interconnected plot. Not every random event will require, or even be suitable, for this treatment, but sometimes two or three events occur that simply scream out: 'Storyline!'

Here is an example:

*Imperial Patrol Ship Aggressor* – The captain and crew of the ship are convinced the PCs broke a Red Zone blockade and are determined to catch up with them, hopefully in another act of interstellar criminality. They hate to be made a fool of. If they hear the PC's ship is in-system, they will try to intercept and harass.

As a Storyline, this is quite low-key - more of an ongoing encounter. Yet, quite easily it could escalate to something more, particularly if the Aggressor *does* catch the PCs red-handed.

Here is another example:

**Deadly Virus** – A corporation, Antares, has lost control of an experimental virus called Virax 903 by the media. Or, is Antares testing the virus to see how effective it is? One colony has already been ravaged by it.

This Storyline came about due to two seemingly related events; the first was a patron who wanted a canister stolen from a secret asteroid laboratory, the second was a random event calling for a starport to be shut-down because of some emergency. The player put two and two together to come up with a viral outbreak, relating it back to the canister the team had stolen the session before. Note that we don't know anything else...how can we? We haven't seen any other events or encounters that seem to add any extra information to the Storyline. There is certainly no point in sitting down to write hundreds of words about the virus, its intended use, what it does or what has gone wrong so far – such details would be a complicated irrelevance. All *we* are interested in is how that Storyline relates to the PCs.



## 💭 SOLO



As the SOLO campaign progresses more Storylines will probably develop as encounters and random rolls present new ideas. Storylines are considered to be 'open' as long as they are unresolved. They are resolved once the Storyline can progress no further – perhaps Antares goes out of business, or the Virax 903 project is shut down; or the Aggressor is destroyed or re-assigned. Resolved Storylines can be crossed out or the notes amended in the campaign diary.

Of course new Storylines can be created and added to the list, but the player should beware of having too many of these Storylines active at one time. One is good, two can be done, three is getting a little bit unmanageable and over-complicated. Don't try four or more ...

A couple of Storylines on the boil keeps your SOLO game interesting, provide a general flow of events and sit ready for the player to use as inspiration, tying in new patron missions or random encounters, further extending and growing the Storyline.

Don't get too tied up with the idea of having a Storyline, though. You can play SOLO quite easily without any Storyline at all. You will make deals, concoct plans, carry out dangerous missions, resolve angry disputes between PCs and handle random events and encounters. You will have a great game. To be honest, though, if you are a typical roleplayer, you will be dreadfully unlucky if you don't tie a couple of events together after a two or three roleplaying sessions. Roleplayers just seem to see plots, stories, links, connections and conspiracies wherever they go! That is a Storyline.



🗘 S O L O

## Life Events As Storylines

Even without the creation of Storylines in-play, the Player still has access to a source of great drama that can complicate and liven up any session of SOLO: Life Events. All characters should have three of these and they aren't just there to bulk out the character description. The Life Events are complications and story hooks that can be used by the Player to link otherwise random events together to create a *personal* Storyline.

Bring one into play when it feels natural, particularly when you are struggling to find any other type of suitable Storyline for the game. Should one of the characters be hunted by a scorned lover or a bounty hunter, then perhaps that random roll onboard ship that suggests a passenger has seen a gun in a fellow traveller's cabin, or that suggests a passenger is mysteriously refusing to leave their cabin, could indicate the bounty hunter is on the same ship, and preparing to strike.

A Life Event that is turned into one of the game's Storylines could last for a couple of sessions, or span the entire game, just as Simon Tam's personal backstory did in Firefly.

🗘 s o l o

# Random Rolls

While the Plan might be the heart of any SOLO game, random encounters and event tables form the hard sinew and muscle of the game. The 'meat'. In essence they are 'idea' and 'plot' generators, giving the PCs something to do in a session. Sometimes the result leads nowhere and does not seem significant, although many results will require some player decision-making and some PC action. Those 'inconsequential' events and encounters should still be logged in the diary, though, because as Storylines are generated, these low-key events could simply be part of one of those Storylines, or even inspire a new one.

You might be expecting random rolls to be prescribed at set times in a session, creating a rigid structure which the player must follow for the game to work. This is not necessarily the case. You, as Player, roll on the random encounter and event tables when something is needed to push the PCs on. While the tables are assigned (below) to set stages of the player characters' journey through a subsector, any one of these can be skipped if desired. Or the roll can be repeated, or ignored. Nothing is set in stone. This is the roleplaying way, Universal World Profiles can be modified, altered, and changed – and so can these random rolls. To be honest, though, they are often best rolled-and-read and only altered or swapped if the result makes 'not a blind bit of sense' at all.

The following Random Tables are included in this chapter; they are applicable to all of the different campaign types.

- Tell Me, D6
- NPC Reactions
- Colourful Locals
- Starport Encounters
- Ship Encounters
- Ship Types
- Ship Reactions
- Law Level Checks
## 💭 S O L O

## TELL ME, D6

When the player needs more information, about a situation (especially when drama might ensue) about a person or some random element - roll a single D6, with 1 indicating 'less' and 6 indicating 'more'. This is a 'on a scale of 1-to-6' roll.

1D	Person	1D	Situation
1	Bad, bad, bad.	1	The worst possible thing happens
2	Untrustworthy; if he can double- cross he might	2	Bad stuff happens. But it's not yet catastrophic.
3	OK but Quirky	3	OK for now
4	OK, or so he seems	4	OK for now
5	Decent, don't worry	5	We're good.
6	Honest, good, dependable	6	The best result possible!

Use the Tell Me D6 for a whole host of information gathering situations. The PCs have met their journalist contact. The player senses some drama. Perhaps he's not on the level? Roll D6. The PCs are climbing up a shaft in vacc suits on an asteroid to get to their ship before the charges they planted explode. The Player senses some drama. Roll D6. Usually the roll is used for those times when a simple skill roll is not appropriate or when the scene resolution rules of The Plan are not being used.

Don't stop there. What condition is the vehicle in that the guide has provided for the desert trip? Roll **Tell Me – D6**, a 1 or 2 is dire, the ATV is falling to bits and is an antique model; 3-4 it is functional, what you would expect; on 5-6 the ATV is top of the range. What about other situations .... What will the PCs find at the end of the tunnel? On 1-3 a skeleton of a lost explorer, on 4-6 the lair of a ferocious wild animal. Roll the die ...

A single D6 is a powerful tool.

Each number has a 16% chance of coming up.

If you split the rolls into 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6 then each result has a 1/3 chance of occurring. Split the dice into 1-3 and 4-6 and you have a 50-50 chance. The D6 is versatile and extremely useful!

Many times in a SOLO game I have simply speculated at dramatic moments: '*what is the worst thing that could happen right now?*' Then I roll a D6. On a '1' that terrible calamity occurs. This certainly creates tension!

For example: the PCs are wading across a rapidly-flowing river, near some semisubmerged rocks. They carry their kit above their heads. The PCs make a quick skill roll and succeed - but I wonder, what is the worst thing that could happen right now? Well ... wouldn't it be awful if the local ambush predators (six legged critters that are a cross between crocodiles and spider crabs) suddenly attacked the PCs? Let's roll a D6...





## COLOURFUL LOCALS

	marviadais
11	Adventurers
12	Alien Starship Crew
13	Ambushing Brigands
14	Bandits
15	Beggars
16	Belters
21	Drunken Crew
22	Fugitives
23	Government Officials
24	Guards
25	Hunters and Guides
26	Law Enforcers on Patrol
31	Local Performers
32	Maintenance Crew
33	Merchants

- 34 Military Personnel on Leave
- 35 Noble with Retinue
- 36 Peasants

D66 Individuals

#### D66 Individuals

- 41 Political Dissident
- 42 Potential Patron
- 43 Public Demonstration
- 44 Religious Pilgrims
- 45 Reporters
- 46 Researchers
- 51 Riotous Mob
- 52 Security Troops
- 53 Servant Robots
- 54 Soldiers on Patrol
- 55 Street Vendors
- 56 Technicians
- 61 Thugs
- 62 Tourists
- 63 Traders
- 64 Vigilantes
- 65 Workers
- 66 Player's Choice

### NPC REACTIONS

2D	Reaction	
2-3	Hostile	NPC will actively work against the PCs.
4-5	Guarded	NPC does not trust the PCs. Will show no favours.
6-8	Neutral	Treats PCs like everyone else. Unconcerned.
9-10	Friendly	There is some point of connection or common interest. They may show some favour to the PCs.
11- 12	Allied	NPC finds a common cause with the Cs and show favour, assist or help further the cause of the group.

Dice Modifiers:

+1 for possession of Carousing or Liaison (or Streetwise if applicable)

- +1 if PC served 5+ Terms in Scouts or Military
- -1 if World Population is 9+
- -1 if Social Standing 3 points higher or lower than NPC
- -2 if the PCs are police or naval crewmen

💭 S O L O

## STARPORT ENCOUNTERS

#### d66 Starport Event

- 11 Starport Shutdown 1 week. Issue is a labour dispute, accident, festively/holiday or security problem.
- 12 Your cargo is in the wrong place and your ship can't wait till whenever for it to be moved. Will Bribery or Admin help here?
- 13 Your ship or ship's crew are in trouble, perhaps legally, perhaps personally or perhaps mechanically. They may need assistance.
- 14 Customs Roll 5+ for the cargo to clear customs. If not, there may be a 1 week delay or a duty to pay (1%). Is there a way around it? An Admin roll, on 10+ will find a loophole.
- 15 Red Tape Transfer papers contain irregularities. Bribery or Admin should smooth the way.
- 16 Security Security at starports is always high, you and your cargo are searched. The search will throw up some issue to do with your cargo or luggage you were unaware of on a 6 on 1d6. Arrest? Detention? Week-long delay? Set-up by a rival trader or a spurned seller? Roleplay the results.
- 21 Meet a fellow traveller as a potential Contact. Roll on reaction table to make their acquaintance, roll on Patron table to determine their identity. Record the reaction result. Require a result of 8+ ('interested') for a friendship. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance, cheap cargo, help in dealing with a problem, etc.
- 22 Meet one of your contacts who needs your help. Is it financial, legal, administrative or personal?
- 23 Your cargo is pilfered or damaged, reduce amount by 10-60%
- 24 Bunch of asteroid miners in port causing trouble all week for port officials and other travellers.
- 25 Meet a minor celebrity/dignitary/notable in the company of a couple of aides/guards.
- 26 Port personnel confuse you with someone else; roll 1d6 and on 1-3 this is good, on 4-6 it is bad. A quick ID check should sort it out shouldn't it?
- 31 A ship has limped into port this week with damage and crew casualties.
- 32 Meet one of your contacts they are desperate for help.
- 33 Find a great hang-out/bar/cafe/restaurant at the port. Perfect for hiding away, making deals or wooing someone.
- 34 Mysterious ship landed at the port, no-one allowed to see it or go near it, though there are plenty of rumours around.
- 35 Warehouse has cargoes available for auction in order to get rid of them. Determine goods, determine price; player puts in a bid. Roll 8+ to get the cargo at your price., -1 if bidding over half, -2 if bidding half or less than, -4 if bidding a quarter or less than of the price.
- 36 Free trader crew arrested and their ship seized.
- 41 Someone needs to get off-world fast ... but it's not as simple as that ....
- 42 One of your skills is recognized by a port employee ... they have a little problem, could you help them with it?
- 43 Fire alarm keeps going off everyone is jumpy and nervous.
- 44 You are approached to smuggle illegal goods off-planet. If you accept, roll Bribery 8+ to succeed. There may be other complications. If you refuse you may make an enemy of the smuggler.
- 45 A cargo seized by customs is going cheap. You can pick it up for a bonus (+2 on purchase table). Do the original owners want it back, though?
- 46 Military ships in port causing a variety of problems for other travellers.
- 51- Meet a fellow traveller as a potential Contact. Roll on reaction table to make their
- 53 acquaintance, roll on Patron table to determine their identity. Record the reaction result. Require a result of 8+ ('interested') for a friendship. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance, cheap cargo, help in dealing with a problem, etc.
- 54- Meet one of your contacts.

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66 Nothing out of the ordinary occurs.

## 💭 zolo

### SHIP ENCOUNTERS

Whilst the other primary tables are fairly self-explanatory, the ship encounter tables require a short introduction. When leaving or approaching a main world, or if lingering in the system for any time, roll once on the appropriate encounter table: Major Routes or Frontier Routes. The starport of the mainworld identifies which table to roll on. Check for Die Modifiers applicable to that mainworld.

The result indicates some communication with a passing ship, even if routine. In some cases the encounter will not be routine. Roll on the Ship Type Table (P7) to determine exactly what kind of ship it is. Ship types are inspired by classic designs and a number of freelance ship designs posted on the internet. You can easily substitute a design that you prefer, particularly if you have a set of deckplans for it.

Note that names of specific ships are suggested on the Ship Type Table (P7), these are included I order to track encounters, perhaps allowing the PCs to run into the same ship at another location, perhaps under different circumstances. If they detect a ship in distress in a system's asteroid belt, the player make link the encounter back to a meeting with a ship a few weeks earlier. 'It's the same ship! Why is it here? What happened to it?' In this way a Storyline is created. As with Ship Types, insert your own names, if preferred.

### **MAJOR ROUTES**

(class	A, B & C ports)		
2D	Type of Encounter		
2-4	-		
5	Scout Table*		
6	Special Table		
7	Small Transport Table		
8	Large Transport Table		
9	Industrial Table		
10	Military Table		
11	Large Transport Table		
12	Military Table		
13	Large Transport Table		
14	Special Table		
+1 Pop 8+ +1 Naval Base -1 Scout Base			

-1 C Class starport

\* Roll 3D if on an X-Boat link

#### FRONTIER ROUTES (class D, E & X ports)

- 2D Type of Encounter
  - 2-8
  - 9 Frontier Table
  - 10 Small Transport Table
  - 11 Military Table
  - 12 Industrial Table
  - 13 Large Transport Table
- +1 Pop 6+
- -1 X Class starport

### Piracy Warning

Major Route: 12+ on 2D Frontier Route: 11+ on 2D

## 💭 Z O L O

### SHIP TYPES

20	Inductrial	24	Militon	24	Special
<b>2D</b> 2-4	Industrial Ore Carrier 1000 Enterprise: Beijing, Leedan, Mephistopholes, Glisen Enterprise	<b>2d</b> 2-4	Military Mercenary Cruiser 800 Broadsword: Sabre, Claymore, Lucifer, Jacob's Ladder	<b>2d</b> 2	<b>Special</b> Fat Corsair 400 <i>Challenger Ghost:</i>
5	Mining Derrick 600 Oregon: New Horizon, Poseidon, Voyager	5	Light Patrol Craft 200 Vorenus: Rapax, Venator, Gladius, Invictus, Novus, Hellas, Felix	3	Emergency Response Boat 100 <i>Kineshii: Sanctuary,</i> <i>Mercy II, Hope, Relief,</i> <i>Haven, Refuge,</i> <i>Tranquility</i>
6	Tanker Tender 1000 Syndic: Deep Blue, Cleopatra, Yeoman Bridge	6	Close Escort 400 Punisher, Arbitrator, Justicar, Tormentor, Vindicator	4	Personal Transport 100 Steed: Iruushigak, Niffleheim, My Lucy, Isengard
7	Mining Cutter 50 YY	7	Patrol Cruiser 400 Arrogant, Audacious, Illustrious, Zealous, Vanguard, Trident, Vigilant, Intrepid, Glorious, Warspite, Monarch, Fortitude, Ardent, Defiance, Swiftsure	5	Express Courier 200 Sprinter: Ben Morgan, Julian, Ambrose, Certainty
8	Prospecting Ship 100 Seeker: Chancer, Hero of the People, Snake Eyes, Vara's Den, Saturn 5	8	Fleet Courier 400 Astra, Horizon, Zenith, Perigee, Zodiac, Nadir	6	Merchant Courier 100 <i>Eucles: Nautilus,</i> <i>Herod, Deneb</i>
9	Lab Ship 400 Artemis: Sophocles, Aristotle	9	Battlecruiser 1250 Victory Class: Alemann	7	Yacht 150 Wind: Harmony, Destiny, Symphony
10- 11	Salvage Cruiser 2000 Garshiirarmu: Opportunity	10	Destroyer Escort 1000 DE Argus Class: Arethusa, Aurora, Galatea, Penelope, Phaeton, Royalist	8-9	Small Craft (Private) <i>various</i>
12	Mobile Teaching Hospital 200 <i>Orbis</i>	11	SDB 400 Avenger: no names	10	Lab Ship 400 Artemis: Sophocles, Aristotle
		12	Fleet Squadron in Transit	11- 12	Safari Ship 200 Animal: Ocelot, Leopard

# 🗘 Z O L O

3D	Small Transport		
3	Merchant 200 Manta: Arcturus, Nebula, Crimson Flag	12	Small Craft (Industrial/Science)
4-5	Subsidized Merchant 400 Stellar: Vector, Transtar, Courier, Reliant, Clear Horizon, Starfall, Certainty, Axis, Los Alamos, Mainstay, Challenger, Glory of Vega	13	Subsidized Merchant 400 Challenger Class: Kraken, Ocean, Yarbond, Hammerhead, Hero, Equity, Concord, Iteration, Globus, Napoli
6	Frontier Trader 400 <i>Boudicca: Venturer, Adventure,</i> <i>Expedition, Explorer</i>	14	Free Trader 200 Hero Class: Ambassador, Centennial, Gainful, Beowulf, Vash, Jabberwock, Weyland
7	Merchant 300 Goose: Cartagena, Turin, Orb's Luck, Just Cause,	15	Small Craft (Personal)
8	Small Craft (SPA)	16	Light Transport 200 Nighthawk: Jumpmonkey, Aquinas, Valerian, Optimus
9	Small Craft (Corporate)	17	Far Trader 200 Kyuseita: Rift Jumper, Phantom, Nephillim, Saint Helena, Netrix
10	Modular Starship 300 Deneb: Aldebaran, Sirius, Procyon, Barnard, Castor	18	Merchant 300 Relationship: Accord, Agreement, Lentari Queen
11	Far Trader 200 Emperor Class: Marchant, Alexander, Nicolai, Ferdinand, Nero		



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2D	Large Transport	2D/	Scout (Roll 3D if on an X-Boat link)
20		3D	
2-4	Long Liner 1000 Pride of Vega, Deneb Express, Spirit of Arcturus	2-4	Surveyor 400 Dartilla Class: Nicomandia, Kish
5	Freighter 3000 Golden Harvest, Safety First, Star Liner, First Option	5	Scout 100 Golf Ball: Maynard, King Louis, Vernier, Citadel
6	Bulk Cargo Hauler 5000 Hercules class: Titan, Atlas, Mammoth, Samson, Endurance, Constitution, Goliath	6	Fast Scout 100 <i>Adder, Cobra, Rattlesnake</i>
7	Subsidised Liner 600 Stellar Class: Spinward Star, Majestic Star, Golden Star, Sun Star, Island Star, Star Venture, Evening Star, Winward Star, Dawn Star	7-8	Scout 100 Type S: Eagle's Claw, Lightspeed, Kiruul, Grim Reaper, Nightfleet, Thunderchild, Excalibur, Odyssey
8	Merchant Transport 500 Reliant: Armstrong, Kelvin, Nautilus, Saratoga	9	Modular Scout 125 Eagle: Copenhagen, Vega Star, Spectra
9	Cargo Carrier 1000 OB101, OB167, OB230	10- 11 12	Scout 100 Type S: Eagle's Claw, Lightspeed, Kiruul, Grim Reaper, Nightfleet, Thunderchild, Excalibur, Odyssey Extended Fast Scout 150 Hispaniola, Braveheart
10	Frontier Transport 2000 Britannia, Sharshahan, Panther, Hernandez, Cortez	13- 14	X-Boat Tender
11- 12	Ore Carrier 1000 Beijing Enterprise, Leedan, Mephistopholes, Glisen Enterprise	15- 18	X-Boat awaiting pickup

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3D	Frontier		
3	Cargo pod/escape ball	11	Frontier Trader 400 Boudicca: Venturer, Adventure, Expedition, Explorer
4	Derelict vessel	12	Prospecting Ship 100 Seeker: Chancer, Hero of the People, Snake Eyes, Vara's Den, Saturn 5
5	Mining Derrick 600 Oregon: New Horizon, Poseidon, Voyager	13	Scout 100 Type S: Eagle's Claw, Lightspeed, Kiruul, Grim Reaper, Nightfleet, Thunderchild, Excalibur, Odyssey
6	Scout 100 Golf Ball: Maynard, King Louis, Vernier, Citadel	14	Safari Ship 200 Animal: Ocelot, Leopard
7	Fat Corsair 400 <i>Challenger Ghost:</i>	15	Close Escort 400 Punisher, Arbitrator, Justicar, Tormentor, Vindicator
8	Surveyor 400 Dartilla Class: Nicomandia, Kish	16	Pirate squadron!
9	Far Trader 200 Emperor Class: Marchant, Alexander, Nicolai, Ferdinand, Nero	17	Fast Scout 100 Adder, Cobra, Rattlesnake
10	Patrol Cruiser 400 Arrogant, Audacious, Illustrious, Zealous, Vanguard	18	Asteroid Hermit

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## 💭 S O L O

## SHIP REACTIONS

Can anything meaningful come of distant ship encounters? Sometimes adventures can begin when the navigator raises a ship on the comm system ...

- **3D Frontier** (for scout/military ships roll on appropriate table)
- 3-5 Fugitives from imperial law, they need a new ship...
- 6-7 Debris and wreckage from the rolled ship
- 8-9 Radio silence, they fear pirates
- 10 Ignore you, but polite
- 11-12 Asks for info on world you've just left
- 13 Asks for help with a repair
- 14-15 Crew are hostile and suspicious, warning you away
- 16-18 Medical emergency, they have no doctor or supplies

### 3D Industrial

- 3-5 Thinks you are a pirate, based on rumour
- 6-7 Thinks you are from rival company, warns you away
- 8 Comms are out, radio silence
- 9 Medical emergency, their doctor is ill!
- 10-11 Ignore you, but polite
- 12 Asks for info on world you've just left
- 13 Requires help with repair, please!
- 14-15 Require assistance with violent crewman
- 16 Refined ore in space from that ship. But no ship.
- 17-18 Hijacked vessel, unusual trajectory/call signs

### 3D Transport/Special

- 3-5 Thinks you are a pirate, based on rumour
- 6-7 Transport matches a ship that went missing last year
- 8 Comms are out, radio silence
- 9 Medical emergency, their doctor is ill!
- 10-11 Ignore you, but polite
- 12 Asks for info on world you've just left
- 13 Requires help with repair, please!
- 14-15 Require assistance with violent passenger/crewman
- 16 Cargo in space from that ship. But no ship.
- 17-18 Hijacked vessel, unusual trajectory/call signs

### 3D Scouts

- 3-5 Scout in distress; it has returned from a failed mission
- 6-7 Warn you away from a gravitational disturbance
- 8 On way to map a moon
- 9 Mapping gravitation anomalies
- 10-11 Launching a nav beacon
- 12 Friendly hail, ask about world you have come from
- 13 Ignore you, but are polite
- 14 Ask for you sensor logs
- 15 Mapping jump wakes, stay clear
- 16 Need a civilian spare part
- 17-18 Looking for a missing X-Boat



#### 3D Military

- 3-6 Warn you of an unidentified ship in this system
- 7 Need some civilian spare parts from your ship
- 8 Asking for info on world just left
- 9 Ignore you, will not answer comms
- 10-11 Ignore you, but are polite
- 12 Asking for sensor logs
- 13 Security Checks
- 14 Boarding
- 15-16 Warn you of piracy in this system
- 17-18 One of your crew is wanted, see security checks

## LAW LEVEL CHECKS

Law Level checks involve interactions with local planetary law enforcement. Some worlds have stricter laws than others. This is represented by the world's Law Level value. The higher the Law Level, the more likely that offworld visitors will be harassed by local law enforcement. When the Player determines that a security encounter happens, a local police officer will stop the PCs and require identification. Further complications are at the Player's discretion.

Should the PCs be up to no good, the Player can call for a Law Level Check to determine if the security forces cause any problems. Don't use this check routinely, only when the appearance of cops would throw a spanner in the works.

The check involves rolling 2D, **roll OVER the planet's Law Level** to avoid any 'entanglements'. If the result is EQUAL to or LESS THAN the Law Level, then your PCs had better start thinking fast!





# Example of Play (1)

I decide on a Travellers campaign type and create four characters from scratch, not having any preconceptions about their sex or career. I end up with:

*Merchant Fourth Officer Cassander Novo* 676A67 Age 22 1 term Cr5000 Broker 2, Navigation 1, Steward 1, Mechanics 0, Electronics 0, Admin 0

Secretly in love with Lisa Lao; Responsible for destruction of his ship; Reckless, relies on talking his way out of trouble; Enemy: his old captain's brother – also a merchant captain; from High-Tech world.

Naval Lieutenant Julian Vilius56C88C Age 24 1½ term Cr zeroComputer 1, Gravitics 1, Gun Cbt 1, Carousing 0, Zero-G 1, Space Science 0

Son of a count – his family disowned him; Had affair with senior officer and childhood friend – causing his dishonourable discharge from the Navy; Has a powerful friend (Contact) in the Navy; Hates Lisa Lao, she is always challenging his status and family; from Garden World.

Ex-Belter Helena Jackson686638 Age 26 2 termsCr1000Prospecting 2, Zero-G 2, Computer 1, Survival 0, Gun Cbt 0High Psg

Used to train other Belters; She knows Vilius' secret about his expulsion from the Navy; Has a Contact in the Merchants who helped to get her a job; Carried out secret mission as a Belter in a Red Zone – caught by Navy and kicked out of Belter clan who disowned her – Helena has never forgiven them; from Desert World.

Ex-Colonial Councillor Lisa Lao786767 Age 32 3½ terms Cr3000Wheeled Vehicle 2, Gun Cbt 2, Farms 1, Survival 2, Zero G 0,High Psg, Mid PsgLiaison 1, JoT 1

Dome on colony blew out, Lisa suffered severe injuries and chemical burns; She has practical ideas and was promoted quickly; Her dome building policy was sabotaged for political ends and this haunts her; Life-long friend of Belter Helena Jackson; from Corrosive Atmosphere World.



We start on Ninshien, a small world in a subsector of my own creation:

### Ninshien D4A2634-A NonIndustrial

Ninshien is a methane world. I figure it could easily be home to Lisa Lao just after the dome tragedy that plays such a large part in her background. Since Belter Helena is her friend, perhaps the other PCs are here to take her off-planet, which means therefore the government must be trying to hold her – to try and convict her? Here then, is our **In Media Res**, starting the game with a mission in progress. The PCs will have to use an ATV to cross the harsh surface and reach a starship that has been chartered and is waiting at a refuelling base near a methane lake. The PCs will be pursued by local security teams in ATVs.

Now, time for the first Plan! Cassander will break into a hanger to steal an ATV, everyone boards and then Lisa will drive everyone to the starship across rough terrain she knows well. I rate the Plan as Solid (8+), but Dangerous. I award the PC team +1 for success because Lisa is a skilled ATV driver and she knows the terrain, and I award a second +1 because the back-end of the Plan (getting off world) has been covered by having a chartered starship standing by.

I roll 2D with a total result of 11: success! I now roll for consequences, they are good. Let's say the ship captain is very sympathetic and so the team make their first contact: the 400-ton Frontier Trader 'The Explorer'. I add it to my Contacts List. Now the team are on board, the ship takes off and we head for the jump point. Prior to jump I roll the routine Starship Encounter – the vessel passes a military ship, an 800ton Mercenary Cruiser called the 'Lucifer'. It asks for The Explorer's sensor log, but everything is OK. Then we jump.

### **JUMP FROM NINSHIEN TO MAZANDARAN**

We settle in for a week in jumpspace. I roll once on the Jump Events table. The navigator on The Explorer has a personal crisis and the captain asks Lisa to help (she has Liaison 2). Let's say the navigator is depressed due to a past event. I invent the story that he should have spoken out in asteroid belt 29 Persei, about a mass killing by a tyrannical mining boss. Instead, he took a bribe. Lao makes a Liaison 8+ skill roll, but fails with a double 2. Oh no! I guess the navigator commits suicide! The captain is very shocked but grateful for Lao's help. In desperation he offers Novo the navigator's job for the next 4 jumps (to 29 Persei ... I chose that location so the PCs might bump into this tyrannical mining boss at some point ...) the captain offers the PCs free passage for those four jumps.

### Mazandaran B785784-C Agricultural, Rich

After entering the system I roll again on the Starship Encounters table. They pass a scoutship, the Eagle's Claw – it's a friendly hail, and the crew ask The Explorer about Ninshien. The PCs tell them about the dome explosion and the imperial cruiser in the system. At the starport, on this hot, dusty world with its one giant, fertile river, snaking more than halfway around the globe, the PCs find that The Explorer needs urgent maintenance (I rolled on the Starport Encounters table) – let's say there was a fusion overheat during landing. It will require a week-long repair. I decide the





captain will have to oversee this repair, so he acts as Patron and pays the PCs to travel up river to the holy city of Ib, surrounded by huge plantations. There they will pay for and take delivery of a small cargo. The PCs take the Explorer's air/raft to Ib. I roll on the World Encounters table while they're out there and find they stumble upon a landed starship. Why not have this starship be the destination, and the cargo has just been off-loaded? Since it landed away from Kharkonal and the starport, it must be an illegal cargo ... there is a secret civil way happening further up-river, but it can't be to do with that if the PCs are buying it. I guess the mysterious ship's crew have been stood-up by their rebel buyers and are now keen to get rid of the incriminating cargo. It must be arms, surely!

Why does the captain of The Explorer want a shipment of arms? Well, he is going to 29 Persei, site of that mining overlord. Maybe he wants the weapons to put down the rebellion... Hey, that would explain the suicide of the navigator, too, ridden by guilt and unable to face supplying him with more weaponry! Novo digs deep, and tries to get information out of the landed ship's captain using his Broker skill. He succeeds ... yes, he believes the Explorer's captain intends to sell it to the mining boss. The PCs load the cargo onto the air/raft and fly back to Kharkonal.

I predict some kind of clash between the PCs and the Explorer's captain (let's call him Devar). Do we have a storyline here? Smuggling arms to a mining despot? I roll on the PC Reaction Table. Lisa is angry at the trade deal and sympathetic with the rebels (no doubt helped by her failure to save the navigator from suicide).

Back at the ship, the Explorer is fixed and both the smuggled arms and other cargos are loaded. I don't care what they are or how much they're worth – this is a Travellers campaign not a Star Traders campaign! Devar denies the arms are for the mining boss and (after I roll a D6 for a 50/50 result) says they are destined for the mining rebels in 29 Persei instead. They've got it all wrong. I don't roll for a second Starport Encounter.

They take off. Prior to jump I roll for a Starship Encounter. They are hailed by a small craft requiring an urgent medical supply. Devar lends assistance, docking with the craft, then going on his way. I don't want to elaborate on this any more because I think I am now in a Storyline about smuggling guns, and I don't want to get side-tracked!

### **JUMP FROM MAZANDARAN TO UBAR**

I roll for a Jump Encounter, but it suggests the sensors are producing false readings – this must be in normal space, before we have jumped. Perhaps Captain Devar is getting jittery and thinks he is being tracked in Mazandaran space. In jump I roll on the Reaction Table – Vilius. He tries to befriend the Belter Helena Jackson (she was diced for randomly). I roll on the NPC Reaction table and it throws up a natural '12'. Wow. Has he just seduced her?! One of her Life Events is that she knows his secret, that he was kicked out of the Navy for having an affair, and not highly decorated as he tells everyone. Perhaps this is how she finds out – 'pillow talk'.

After entering the Ubar system I roll again on the Starship Encounters table – no encounter in this frontier system.





### Ubar D330656-6 Desert, Poor, Non Industrial

Ubar is a poor desert world with a very thin atmosphere, apart from ranchers and miners exposed to cosmic radiation, most inhabitants live at the bottom a huge impact crater so deep that the air at the bottom is breathable without a compressor. The crater has its own weather system, and the floor is farmed extensively. A vast industrial elevator connects the floor with the starport, on the crater's rim.

At the starport the Explorer is refuelled and cargoes offloaded and on loaded. The PCs move into the Rock Canyon Hotel, with rooms and corridors carved out of the sandstone rock, for a couple of days. I am not keeping track of expenses or costs unless it gets serious. The World Encounter table tells me that the PCs come across a ruined structure. Maybe they spotted it during the approach to the starport, they do some research at the hotel and find out that it is 'enigmatic'. I want to get the PCs there, I sense an 'adventure' on the way. Cassander asks around and I decide that he is told that the locals know about it, but no-one knows what it is – natural or perhaps even alien. It is a rocky spire, with spiralling rock tunnels within, a bit like a giant termites' nest. Worth a visit? Cassander's source tells him not to stay out after dark or the six-legged hunting skreens will get him. I figure Helena and Vilius will just want to stay in bed and order room service, so Lao and Cassander hire a rugged Ubar jeep and set off on a day-long trip.

I decide to create a Plan. The two characters will explore the ruin with torches and attempt to find something of use inside. It's a bit vague, I know. This is Fool proof (6+) and Safe. I award them +1 for Lisa's fantastic survival skills. They succeed. Now... what do they find? After 20 minutes (I went to make dinner and have a think) I decided on two options, either the body of a murder victim OR the lair of hunting skreen. I let the D6 decide and it decreed ... animal lair! They disturb hunting skreen, or come across them in the tunnels. They must get to the ATV fast. I create a Plan – Get back to the ATV alive and safe. I add the extra problem of a sandstorm coming in to cause more complications. The Plan is Solid (8+) but Dangerous. I award the PCs with a +1 for Lao's shotgun and survival experience. The roll is failed! And yet, there is a Good consequence – maybe they picked up something from the lair.





What happened? Lost in the tunnels, the two fight off a couple of the huge skreen, and emerge from a passage into a dust storm. This wasn't the way they came in ... but they can't retrace their steps. Following the edge of the ruin they try to find the ATV, but the sounds of skreen force them away from the ruin and they stagger around in the storm. They find a few rocks as shelter where they try to weather out the storm and the night. As the sun comes up they find the ATV and drive back towards the starport.

That was cool! I roll for a Colourful Locals Encounter and discover they are pulled over by local enforcers on patrol. I decide they will be arrested on suspicion of supplying weapons to rebel miners, mutated by the lack of atmosphere, here on Ubar. Back at the starport I make a Liaison roll for Lao and she talks her way out of it. They are free to return to the hotel. So... what did they find? I decide to amalgamate both possibilities from the search of the ruins; they found a half-eaten corpse in the lair, perhaps an explorer or scientist, with a map to a set of unknown tunnels – some kind of treasure map. There are references to 'cache', 'supplies', 'alien' on the map. I think the PCs will decide to give this a go and explore this new set of tunnels. That means they cannot continue on the Explorer with Devar and so say goodbye to him.

The PCs descend to the crater floor to the city where they can buy equipment and do some research for their expedition. Whilst they are in this new city, in a new hotel, I wonder if their recent adventure has had an impact on Cassander's 'secretly in love with Lisa Lao' Life Event. I check on the NPC Reaction table for Lao and with a '9' result it looks like she might return his affections, much to Cassander's delight. So, the PCs have split into two couples. I'm sure it won't last!

Now... the next part of the game sounds contrived, maybe too good to be true ... but I promise, good reader, that I rolled honestly and checked the tables accurately. To get out of the crater, the PCs would have to either drive their rented ATV up the zigzag hairpins on a 12 hour nerve-wracking journey, risking rock-falls and road collapses that kill drivers every year. Or they could travel the Big Lift. This is a gigantic, building-sized elevator carrying people, cargoes and vehicles vertically up from the crater floor to the crater rim ... and to the starport. It is built deep underground, reached by a long tunnel, and it is big, 50m wide and 15m deep, capable of lifting 200 displacement tons at once, perhaps 40 vehicles. Imagine it as a vertical car ferry! Huge steel doors clang shut, the monstrous motors begin to work and drive the lift up its rack-and-pinion rail. It's safe, just slow, noisy and dark!

Once on the rim, Lisa drives them out into the desert to find the tunnel complex, hopefully loaded with forgotten alien artefacts that they can sell for a profit off-world. I create a Plan: To find the secret tunnels in the desert by ATV. This is Solid (8+) and Safe. I award them +1 (for having a Belter who is from a desert world). The result is double '6'. Is this too good to be true? They find the rock outcrop marked on the rocks and camp for the night. Cassander and Lao are on the look-out for hunting skreen. Everyone must wear respirators. As the sun comes up I decide to roll for a World Encounter and the result is a local contact, a surprise visit to their camp. I roll for the NPC's reaction – again a double '6'. Wow. This contact will ally with them. This all seems to be too much of a co-incidence, so it must be part of a new





Storyline. What if the contact says she is the daughter of the missing scientist that Cassander and Lisa found in the ruins? She has the same maps and is following in his footsteps, in an attempt to find him. I like this, but I still think it is too much of a co-incidence, so I look back at my notes, at that reference to mutated miners fomenting revolt. Perhaps this young girl is a scientist, a geologist who mixes with the miners and who is sympathetic to their cause. Her movements by ATV across the desert are a cover for shipping arms and aid to these rebels. She is in league with them – which suggests the tunnels are active and occupied! She pretends to be the daughter of that missing scientist, and pledges to help the PCs.

A new Plan: To search the tunnels for a cache of artefacts of alien origin, as the map suggests. I guess this is a Shaky (10+) and Safe Plan. I award the PCs +1 because they have brought all the equipment they need for exploring ruined tunnels. However, unbeknownst to the PCs, the Plan is actually Dangerous, due to a potential shoot-out with mutated miners – in addition the outcomes are different to what they are expecting, instead of 'find the artefacts' or 'not find the artefacts', the results are 'get caught by the miners' or 'not get caught by the miners'. I roll the dice, it is a Fail, but with a Good consequence.

So ... I need to narrate the events ... the girl, Melissa, leads them in and she pretends to carefully study her copy of the map. She leads them into an ambush that is so swift and overwhelming that the miners immediately overpower the PCs and disarm them. Melissa suspects that the PCs are government agents and so they are thrown into a cave, behind a locked-door. At this point, Melissa reveals her true identity and allegiance. She says the miners want to kill the PCs and steal their ATV. After talking to the PCs she realises they are only treasure hunters and talks the miners into sparing them – for now. Left alone, locked in a cold, dark cave, the PCs must come up with an argument to save themselves. I am at a loss here and ready for bed. I decide to quickly roll on the PC Reaction Table to see if everyone is coping: Novo loses his temper with Belter, Helena Jackson, whilst Lisa Lao stands by her long-time friend. The girls probably blame Novo for the whole trip. I decide to go to bed and think about what plan the four might come up with tomorrow. Will they try to make a break for it? Or will they try to talk their way out? What kind of Plan will I create tomorrow? The player characters might soon wish they'd stayed with Devar on The Explorer!





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# Campaign: Travellers

The default campaign style is that of a mixed group of travelling PCs, veterans of the military services and other walks of life. They might have a small starship with which they move from world to world, or they may travel on commercial starships. Criminals, hunters, fortune hunters, noblemen (and their courtiers), miners, chancers and bounty hunters all fall into this category.

### Checklist

### PREGAME

- 1. Create characters
- 2. Ensure characters have 3 Life Events
- 3. Create one PC relationship for each character
- 4. Go to In Media Res and select or roll for a starting situation
- 5. Begin play ...
- 6. Create a Plan to overcome the starting situation

### **ON-PLANET ACTIVITY**

- 1. Each week on planet roll on the World Encounters table.
- 2. Roll for Patrons, Enemies, Cargoes or Colourful Locals as directed.
- 3. Create a Plan to deal with Colourful Locals or with Patron jobs.
- 4. If some notable activity or location beckons, send the PCs out there. Make encounter rolls as needed and be prepared to create a Plan. Remember to randomly pick a PC out during times of stress or boredom to roll on their Reaction table.

#### JUMPING FROM WORLD TO WORLD

- 1. Roll on the Starport Encounters table.
- 2. If you have a cargo to with you as well, check the Starship Availability table.
- 3. Sort out costs and fees. Board a starship.
- 4. Roll for on the Starship Encounters table.
- 5. Roll on the Onboard Events table for an event. Roll each PC's Reaction table too, how are they feeling about one another?

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- 6. Entering a new system. Roll on the Starship Encounters table.
- 7. Roll on the Starport Encounters table.
- 8. Spend a week on planet between ships.

### BACK TO ON-PLANET ACTIVITY ...

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### In Media Res

We start at the run, with action, skipping directly to a point of the game where you, the Player, have to start making decisions. In this way SOLO begins just like an Indiana Jones movie, or a Bond film. If you prefer to begin your campaign in a hotel lobby, with all of the characters introducing themselves to one another, then feel free to do so. But for roleplaying engagement and getting the ball rolling (something often hard to do in a solo game) the **In Media Res** technique cannot be beaten.

Select one of the options below, or roll 2D. A situation will be presented to you; note that there may be a little thinking required to fit that situation around your player characters. Then start making a Plan. How will you deal with it? If you have your own situation, perhaps something that uniquely fits the background of your player characters, then feel free to go with that instead.

#### 2D Starting Situation

- 2-3 **Hijack**. The free trader your PCs are travelling on has been hijacked by three of the passengers (possibly with help from a crew-member it is still unclear). One hijacker has barricaded himself into the engineering section, the others are on the bridge. All the crewmembers (including the passengers the PCs) have been locked inside a single stateroom. The crew have no combat experience and are fearful of being spaced. What do you do?
- 4 **Manslaughter.** It was a simple job, provide protection and company for a rich traveller to this backwater world. But he's gotten into a fight that wasn't his fault and accidentally killed someone. Now the heat is on, be it the cops, a local gang or whatever. Get to the starport and off-world fast.
- 5 **Pirates.** The free trader your PCs are travelling on has been intercepted by a scout ship that demands to dock otherwise it will launch a full salvo of missiles. Travelling only between 'safe' systems, the free trader is unarmed. The crew have no combat experience and are about to be boarded in 15 minutes. What do you do?
- 5 **AWOL.** The PCs are being paid to get a military officer to the starport where a ship is waiting to take him off-world. He may be a defector, a spy, a coward or simply be disillusioned. The military of the planet do not intend him to leave, however.
- 6 **The Package.** Paid to carry a small package off-world, the PCs leave the patron's premises just before gunmen arrive to kill him. Now they want the package and will kill anyone who has touched it. Get off world quickly!
- 7 **Stuck**. There is an emergency on planet that the PCs are caught up in. Travel is curtailed and if they don't get to the starport in 3 days the last transports will leave and there will be no way off planet for weeks or months.
- 8-9 **Arrested**. One of the PCs has been held by security at the hotel for some (real or imagined) past crime until the police arrive. The hotel security officer has no idea the suspect has friends in the building ...
- 10-11 **Missing.** One of the PCs (choose or determine randomly) is missing, despite the group having booked passage on a starliner leaving in three days' time. The reason for the disappearance should be linked to one of the PC's hooks if possible.
- 12 **Low Berth**. Low berth pods open automatically and the PCs get out. They are on a ship, but there seems to be no crew onboard. What type of ship is it? Where are they? What happened? The SOLO Player might decide between alien infestation, piracy or hijacking, or some strange jump drive anomaly.

💭 S O L O

## **ONBOARD EVENTS - PASSENGER SHIP**

#### d66 Encounter

- 11 Hijack or piracy or both
- 12 There is an incident amongst the crew and they turn to the PC for help.
- 13 What the problem is will probably revolve one of the PCs skills, status or situation.
- 14 An accident aboard ship requires repair, may involve an injury or some
- inconvenience. See Ship Malfunction Table.
- 15 Fire in the cargo area an electrical fault in the cargo bed rollers.
- 16 Demanding passenger is a friend of destination's port manager.
- 21 Passenger is an inspector for the government who is authorized a tour of the ship.
- 22 Crewman becomes sullen, uncommunicative and makes mistakes, but will not discuss.
- 23 Recycling systems require maintenance, it's a *messy* job.
- 24 Find out some useful info from a passenger about the destination world, use it to either get half price living costs at the starport, a +1 on any Admin roll, or re-roll a cargo result during a cargo search. Make a Contact.
- 25 Crewman's or passenger's fresher is broken , the stateroom is flooded!
- 26 Jump field misaligning, requires spot retuning of the drive, very dangerous.
- 31 Cargo containers have shifted due to grav compensator malfunction. Need re-setting.
- 32 There's one obnoxious passenger people try to avoid. This trip will be miserable unless someone deals with him, which skill will work with him/her? (1) Streetwise, (2) Carouse, (3) Admin, (4) Bribery, (5) Leader, 6) Social Standing. Liaison is always appropriate. Make a suitable roll to deal with this person.
- 33 Sensors are producing false readings. Or are they? If so, why?
- 34 Cargo container explosion and chemical fire.
- 35 Two passengers have a blazing and unresolved argument. It needs resolving!
- 36 A passenger shows too much interest in another, and attempts entry into his/her cabin.
- 41 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- 42 Fuel pump fails reactor put on stand-by, something ingested during fuel scooping?
- 43 Power failure several tripped fuses, shuts down power in parts of engineering.
- 44 Meet one of your contacts who needs your help. Is it financial, legal, administrative or personal?
- 45 Passenger declares he has seen a gun in another passenger's stateroom.
- 46 A passenger falls mysteriously ill.
- 51 Security patrol ship makes contact in outer system or close to main world. (1) checks registry; moves on; (2) asks for passenger lists, is looking for a fugitive; (3) asks for cargo lists, is checking for customs irregularities; (4-5) will board, spend 1-3 hours conducting a routine search then move on. Roll 5+ for PC to avoid some cargo or personal irregularity which leads to his or her put under scrutiny/fined/delayed or detained; (6) the starship is breaking the law and will be accompanied to the starport where it will be impounded and investigated. Can the PC help with Bribery or Admin or other skills in preventing this?? If not, everyone is detained at the starport for 1-3 weeks, cargoes included. On a second roll of 10+ the panicked starship captain makes a run for it and the patrol ship will be forced to fire on the fugitive vessel.
- 52 Crewman has an affair with a passenger.
- 53 Gambling passenger takes everyone's money and causes bother ...
- 54 Meet a fellow traveller as a potential Contact. Roll on the reaction table to make their acquaintance, roll on Patron table to determine their identity. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance, cheap cargo, help in dealing with a problem, etc.
- 55 Captain runs a crew training session: see Starship Training Table.
- 56 Theft from a passenger stateroom or luggage area.
- 61 Captain is incapacitated, roll for a simultaneous event/crisis that needs resolving!
- 62 Engineering problem requires all crew to help replace a huge component. See Ship Malfunction Table
- 63 Crewman has a crisis of doubt, failure of duty. He/she shuts down.
- 64 One of the stewards is: (1) rude, (2) corrupt, (3) missing, (4) exploitative, (5) thieving, (6) under pressure from a passenger.

- 65 Passenger is extremely reclusive, will not come out of his cabin.
- 66 Mysterious death of passenger or crew, was it murder?

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## ONBOARD EVENTS – NON-PASSENGER SHIP

#### **D66** Encounter

- 11 Piracy or hijack.
- 12 Ship Malfunction. Check table.
- What the problem is will probably revolve one of the PCs skills, status or situation. 13
- An accident aboard ship requires repair, may involve an injury or some 14
- inconvenience. See Ship Malfunction Table. 15
- Fire in the cargo area an electrical fault in the cargo bed rollers. Crewman is very ill, but the reason is a little mysterious.
- 16
- 21 Ship Malfunction. Check table.
- 22 Crewman becomes sullen, uncommunicative and makes mistakes, but will not discuss.
- 23 Recycling systems require maintenance, it's a *messy* job.
- 24 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- 25 Crewman's fresher is broken, the stateroom is flooded!
- 26 Jump field misaligning, requires spot retuning of the drive, very dangerous.
- Cargo containers have shifted due to grav compensator malfunction. Need re-setting. 31
- 32 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- Sensors are producing false readings. Or are they? If so, why? 33
- Cargo container explosion and chemical fire. 34
- 35 Two crewmen have a blazing and unresolved argument. It needs resolving!
- 36 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- 41 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- 42 Fuel pump fails - reactor put on stand-by, something ingested during fuel scooping?
- 43 Power failure – several tripped fuses, shuts down power in parts of engineering.
- 44 Strange readings on the bridge suggest there might be a stowaway.
- 45 The ship computer is acting oddly. Why? Is it malfunctioning? Has it been reprogrammed?
- 46 It appears you have a cargo on-board - that doesn't belong to you ...
- 51 Security patrol ship makes contact in outer system or close to main world. (1) checks registry; moves on; (2) asks for passenger lists, is looking for a fugitive; (3) asks for cargo lists, is checking for customs irregularities; (4-5) will board, spend 1-3 hours conducting a routine search then move on. Roll 5+ for PC to avoid some cargo or personal irregularity which leads to his or her put under scrutiny/fined/delayed or detained; (6) the starship is breaking the law and will be accompanied to the starport where it will be impounded and investigated. Can the PC help with Bribery or Admin or other skills in preventing this?? If not, everyone is detained at the starport for 1-3 weeks, cargoes included. On a second roll of 10+ the panicked starship captain makes a run for it and the patrol ship will be forced to fire on the fugitive vessel.
- 52 Ship Malfunction. Check table.
- 53 Shipboard romance.
- 54 Holiday or commemoration celebration.
- 55 Captain runs a crew training session: see Starship Training Table.
- 56 Crew entertainment evening.
- Captain is incapacitated, roll for a simultaneous event/crisis that needs resolving! 61
- Engineering problem requires all crew to help replace a huge component. 62
- 63 Crewman has a crisis of doubt, failure of duty. He/she shuts down.
- 64 The captain shuts him or herself off. It is quite mysterious.
- 65 Captain runs a crew training session: see Starship Training Table.
- 66 Ship Malfunction. Check table.



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## SHIP MALFUNCTION

D66	Ship Malfunction
11	Airlock malfunctions
12	Grav Plates
13	Water Recycling
14	Computer Glitch
15	Turret Mechanisms
16	Flooding
21	Fusion overheat
22	Plasma leak
23	Air Recycling
24	Ship's Boat drive
25	Manoeuvre drive
26	Jump Drive calibration
31	Security lock-outs
32	Long range sensor ghosting
33	Sensor hardware failure
34	Hull stresses
35	Micrometeoroid strike
36	Heating/Life support problems
41	Jump Drive trigger
42	Jump field generator
43	Fuel pump problem
44	Gas build-up
45	Radiation leak
46	Fusion plant sensor failure
51	Plasma coil replacement
52	Computer core failures
53	Cockpit display glitch
54	Inertial compensators failing
55	Missile targeting errors
56	Missile loader jamming
61	Laser weapon over-heat
62	Bay-door jamming
63	Coolant leak
64	Undercarriage stress weakness
65	Kitchon malfunction

65 Kitchen malfunction66 Waste disposal problem

## SHIPBOARD TRAINING

- 2D Training Duties
- 2 Nav Training
- 3 Fuel-Leak
- 4 Depressurization
- 5 Seminar
- 6 Fire
- 7 Individual training

- 2D Training Duties
  - 8 Power fluctuation
  - 9 Hijack
- 10 Computer Malfunction
- 11 Zero-G Training
- 12 Combat

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## WORLD ENCOUNTERS

#### d66 World Encounter

- 11 Crime. Roll UNDER law level to avoid a random non-lethal crime costing you Cr200 x 1d6.
- 12 Renowned restaurant
- 13 Sudden weather change may affect travel plans
- 14 Political coup or revolution causes chaos, for travel, security and trade.
- 15 Sudden restriction on movement, unless you can find a way to avoid it
- 16 A Patron wants to hire your services. Roll on S1, S2 and S3
- 21 Invited to a posh function
- 22 Ruined structure holds your interest
- 23 Discover a landed spacecraft. Why is it there?
- 24 Interesting or potentially dangerous encounter with some local wildlife.
- 25 Overhear some scandal about a local big-shot (politician/gangster/corporate/celebrity)
- 26 Holiday or festival celebrations slow things down, but become an enjoyable diversion.
- 31 Job opportunity comes up that will last up to three days and pay Cr8000 plus 1d6 x Cr1000.
- 32 The local community is either not what it seems, or very welcoming
- 33 Discover a wonderful little-known retreat, a place to relax or to hide.
- 34 Security check. Roll the Law Level or less to avoid a complete check of papers and a search of belongings and vehicle.
- 35 Patron offers you a short-term courier job to your next destination. Roll on S1 and S3
- 36 Transport delays
- 41 Meet a fellow traveller as a potential Contact. Roll on reaction table to make their acquaintance. Record the reaction result. Require a result of 8+ ('interested') for a friendship. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance. Roll on Patron table to determine their identity.
- 42 Crime. Roll UNDER law level to avoid a random non-lethal crime costing you Cr200 x 1d6.
- 43 Harassed by a group of locals. Roll on Interesting Individuals Table.
- 44 Learn a secret on planet, political, corporate, etc. you can profit from this, if you decide. If so, roll Streetwise to get away with it and gain Cr10-60,000, fail and face being arrested, pursued or shipped off planet.
- 45 Pick up a rumour of some missing fortune out in the wilderness.
- 46 You are offered the chance to make extra money at a job lasting one day and paying Cr1000, or a favour.
- 51 Find yourself travelling with a group of interesting locals, gain useful information about the world.
- 52 Local crisis; bush-fire, earthquake, hurricane, rioting.
- 53 Investment opportunity arises on some local planetary business venture; you may gamble a multiple of Cr1,000 up to Cr10,000. Roll Gambler 8+ or Broker 8+ and if you succeed you gain half-again in profit, if you fail you lose your stake. The result occurs by the end of the week.
- 54 Interesting Individuals (table S4) make life hell for you.
- 55 You are offered the chance to take part in a risky but rewarding venture by a Patron. Roll on S1, S2 and S3.
- 56 Introduced to local entertainments, spending hundreds of credits (Cr100 x 1d6) but gaining a friend and memories of a good time!
- 61 Job opportunity comes up that will last up to three days and pay Cr1000 plus 1d6 x Cr100. Roll on S1, S2 and S3
- 62 You get ill. Roll 1d6, on 1-3 it is some bizarre local disease requiring an expensive local doctor who will cost you Cr600, otherwise you are bedridden each day till you successfully roll End 10+
- 63 You are approached to smuggle illegal goods off-planet. If you accept, roll Bribery 8+ to succeed. There may be other complications. If you refuse you may make an enemy of the smuggler.
- 64 Meet a local as a potential Contact. Record the reaction result. Require a result of 8+ ('interested') for a friendship. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance. Roll on Patron table to determine their identity.
- 65 Embroiled in legal trouble. A Lawyer with Admin 8+ roll will sort out the problem quickly, otherwise you may have to resort to bribery or other methods to get out of the situation.
- 66 Another off-worlder befriends you, they are in a spot of bother it soon transpires, would you help? There may be payment, or a favour.

## 

### PATRONS

D66	Patron
11	Naval Officer
12	Reporter
13	Hunter
14	Soldier
15	Diplomat
16	Army Officer
21	Noble
22	Marine Officer
23	Belter
24	Bureaucrat
25	Starport Official
26	Peasant/Farmer
31	Assassin
32	Avenger
33	Merchant
34	Rogue
35	Professor
36	Gangster

## PATRON MISSIONS

D66	Mission
11	Explore a moon or asteroid
12	Explore ruins
13	Salvage
14	Survey area
15	Capture animal
16	Hijack vehicle or ship
21	Assassination
22	Theft
23	Blackmail
24	Burglary
25	Blackmail
26	Discredit
31	Investigate Theft
32	Investigate Murder
33	Investigate Mystery
34	Investigate Accident
35	Research a target
36	Spy on a Location

D66	Patron
41	Corporate Official
42	Scientist
43	Spy
44	Broker
45	Technician
46	Financier
51	Government Official
52	Scout Pilot
53	Doctor
54	Corporate Boss
55	Local Military Officer
56	Pilot
61	Smuggler
62	Researcher
63	Engineer
64	Mercenary
65	Police Officer
66	Shin-Owner

D66	Mission
41	Protect someone
42	Assist someone
43	Rescue someone
44	Join Expedition
45	Infiltrate Group
46	Find Missing Ship
51	Find Missing Goods
52	Join Expedition
53	Provide Protection on a Journey
54	Trick Someone
55	Bribe
56	Sabotage
61	Find Missing Person
62	Transport Special Item
63	Transport Illegal Goods
64	Transport Data
65	Transport Dangerous Cargo
66	Transport Person

## C) SOLO

## **MISSION TARGETS**

D66	Mission Target
11	Yacht
12	Free Trader
13	Security Ship
14	Naval Craft
15	Cargo Ship
16	Orbital Station
21	Artwork
22	Chemical Canister
23	Data Chip
24	Money or Bonds
25	Prototype
26	Weapon
31-	Illegal Cargo
33	
34-	Cargo
36	

D66	Mission Target
41	Remote Base
42	Orbital Station
43	Starport
44	City Building
45	Underground Vault or Bunker
46	Nightclub
51	Crime Gang
52	Corporation
53	Intelligence Agency
54	Media Corporation
55	Planetary Government
56	Local Police
61- 63	Roll on Patron Table (S1)
62- 66	Roll on Patron Table (S1)



# Campaign: Star Traders

Star Traders use the speculative trading rules found within the Cepheus Engine to pit the Player against the vicissitudes of the interstellar economy. His aim might be simply to stay in play without going broke, it may be more ambitious than that, perhaps he wants to score the big mega credit before he retires from play. However he defines his 'win', the player strives for victory by selling his cargoes for a profit and suffers a defeat if he sells his cargoes at a loss. His financial balance sheet acts as an on-going record of the state of play.

But this is science fiction, not 'fantasy stocks and shares' and the great appeal of solo gaming is the interaction with high technology, starships, exotic planets and interesting NPCs. The Star Trader campaign fills the player's journey through the cosmos with these events and encounters, putting him into predicaments that his character will have to resolve before the game can continue. To some extent the encounters are sets and backdrops to the trading game, but frequent events force the character to respond and the player will need to refer to the task and combat rules in order to tackle these situations. In reality, of course, it's this interaction with the science fiction setting that gets our juices flowing. Yes, there is a financial measure of success, a profit and loss scale, a balance sheet, but that part of the game, in my experience anyway, rapidly fades to become a secondary role. In its place events, relationships with NPCs, chance encounters, problems which leave a character stranded, embarrassed or in mortal danger, become the enjoyable and memorable building blocks of the game.

The aim is to travel from world to world buying cargoes as cheaply as possible then selling them elsewhere for as high a price as possible. This is trade speculation, and becomes a game in as much as the player must select a suitable destination at which to sell his goods for the highest price. With 60 tons of farm machinery on board, it is no good flying out to some asteroid belt, the player needs to maximise his profits by seeking out an agricultural world that wants that cargo! This may be one, two or more jumps away. He will have to weigh up the costs of getting there with the potential profits of a sale. This is the game in a nutshell.

Part of the fun of the game comes in dealing with the starship that the player owns. which transports the cargoes from world to world. It may be a free trader, a subsidized merchant or some other vessel, but whatever it is, the ship will require maintenance and upkeep. It will cost the player character thousands of credits every trip to run, but that all becomes part of the game. The costs facing a starship operator are high, and the player may wonder whether all that financial book-keeping will be worthwhile. These include the cost of fuel, life support, crew salaries, a share of the annual maintenance bill, monthly mortgage repayments and berthing costs. Revenues come from high, middle and low passengers and also come from transporting other people's freight at standard rates.





#### **Operating Costs Table**

Item	Monthly Cost (Cr)
Mortgage	1/240 <sup>th</sup> of Ship Price
Life Support	2,000 per stateroom (3,000 for double occupancy)
Fuel	500 per ton of refined fuel 100 per ton of unrefined fuel
Berthing Costs	1,000 for class A and B 100 for others
Maintenance	0.1% of Ship Price
Crew Salaries:	
Pilot	6,000
<ul> <li>Navigator/Co-pilot</li> </ul>	5,000
Engineer	4,000
Medic	2,000
Steward	3,000

### COST OPTIONS

How much of your SOLO game do you want to involve book-keeping and finance? Here are a few options:

**1-Calculate and apply all costs and revenues:** For many, operating a starship, flying it from world to world through a subsector buying and selling cargoes as you go, is what the campaign should be about. For these people the minutiae of starship economics is certainly worth the effort. It certainly adds to the realism and recreates the hard life faced by free traders living on the edge. It makes financial gains more rewarding.

**2-Average costs and revenues:** This option accepts the costs need to be paid, but that every credit needn't be accounted for. Total all costs and subtract these every trip. Assume all passenger staterooms are filled with middle passage passengers and the low berths are always full. All passengers want to go to the next destination. Any cargo space not filled with the player's own speculative cargo is taken up with freight going to the next destination. Revenue will still have to be calculated, though it will be simplified.

**3-Ignore all costs and passenger revenues:** These focus only on speculative cargo. In this option it is assumed that the revenues from passengers and incidental freight cancels out any operating costs. It might be more easy to accept this option if the player assumes his ship no longer has a mortgage that needs to be repaid. Perhaps the ship was paid off years ago, or claimed in salvage, given as a gift, bought outright second hand or even won in a game of chance.





**4-Switch from a starship to 'Speculation Without a Starship':** Here the starship is written out of the game. Sure, the speculative cargo as well as the player character travels from world to world on starships, it's just that he doesn't own the starship. The character merely books passage for himself and his cargo on a flight going to his desired destination. He will travel on many different ships in the course of a game, paying only for his stateroom and the freight costs. This option can have the most on-planet adventure opportunities.

## SHIP TYPES

Preparing a ship for a trading expedition is a fairly simple process. Essentially you need to select your ship and then prepare a list of costs and revenues. Use the STARSHIP TRADING SHEET to fill in the relevant values that you will be using again and again. It will be useful to have a decent deckplan for the game.

## CREW

A fully fleshed out crew is essential for an interesting and entertaining solo game, it adds a level of unpredictability and dynamism that gives each encounter or event, a more three dimensional and immersive feel to it. Spend some time on this. There are several ways to create your crew; you can roll a number of merchants up using the core book and allocate them to the positions you have on-board, you can simply pick the relevant stats and skills you think would be appropriate or you can pick the characters from a pregenerated list. Add them to the crew roster on the STARSHIP TRADING SHEET. Remember to add Life Events and Reaction Tables for each crewman.

## FAST-PLAY SPACE COMBAT

It may be that the Player wants to play all aspects of the game and if a starship combat encounter should occur, play that out in detail as described in the Cepheus Engine Book. However, there may be others wishing to focus on trading, planetary adventures and interpersonal conflicts; a simple fast resolution space combat system is provided for them here.

For a ship wanting to escape an attack, throw 2D6 for a 10+; add Pilot skill to this throw. If this escape attempt fails, then roll 8+ to avoid being hit by incoming laser or missile fire. Again, add Pilot skill to this roll. Alternate between these two task rolls until the ship escapes or is hit. Add a DM here or there to simulate pursuit by a fighter, or attack from a heavy missile barrage. If the ship is hit then roll 2D6, on a result of 5-12 it is crippled and may be boarded, on a result of 2-4 then the craft is destroyed and must be abandoned. If the player's starship is attacking another vessel, then make the same set of rolls on behalf of the fleeing ship. For those times when two ships go toe to toe in a stand-up space battle, then let both sides roll 2D6 to avoid being hit as above. Skip the attempt to escape task. This system requires some adjudication and improvisation - err on the side of drama and fun!

For Players who want a little more granularity, a further option is offered in the Campaign: Naval Officers chapter, entitled All-In One Space Combat.



## C) SOLO

### SHIP RECORD SHEET

	CLASS		TONNAGE	ARMOUR POINTS
JUMP	MANEOUVRE	E١	NDURANCE (WEEKS)	CARGO
HARDPOINTS/T	URRETS			IULL POINTS
PROBES			SMALL CRAFT/VE	HICLES
OPERATING CO	STS/TRIP			
LIFE SUPPORT	FUEL REFIN	ED _	UNREFIN	IED
OPERATING CO	STS/MONTH			
MORTGAGE TOTAL:	MAINTENAN		SALARIE	S
SHIPS LOCKER				
CREW MANIFES	ST		FITTING & EQUIPME	INT



### SPECULATION WITHOUT A STARSHIP

For anyone choosing Cost Option 4, this section of the rules will show you how some star traders do away with the costly starship altogether and ship their speculative cargoes on established starliners or free traders. There's far less overhead of course, but the downside is that there will be many times when a ship is just not available with the right amount of space that is going to your preferred destination. For the pessimist, hotel bills and warehousing fees just eat away at profits, but for the optimist it simply means one more week on-planet and more opportunities for adventure and excitement!

Follow the established rules for buying and selling cargoes. Next, look for a carrier starship as described in Section 7 of the Trading Checklist, later.



## ACCEPTING MISSIONS

As in the following example, the crew may accept missions from patrons that require planning, roleplaying and dice rolling. The Player should use the Plan and the Random Tables provided in the first half of the book.

## **KEEPING TRACK**

The recommended form of recording is a diary that includes a margin down one side of the sheet used to record any financial transactions. The following section is dedicated to an example of play, a single month in the life of the ICSS Southern Cross and its crew. They begin with Cr100,000 gained from mustering out. Characters might want to pool their finances to create a starting value used for trading, but it is probably better if you award the captain a trading amount; **Cr100,000 is a good starting figure**. Notably, the Southern Cross has no mortgage and is fully paid for. This will make it easier for the Player to make ends meet, and this particular sample game was more concerned with using the trading rules to create opportunities for adventure!



# 🗘 Z O L O

WEEK 1 - HONSHU	Begin with Cr100,00
Industrial, TL 15, 'cyberpunk-type' planet	Wages, fuel, life
Capt & Sergei the navigator search for cargo at the port	support all paid
2 days	
-Basic electronics 40 tons	-Cr91,000
-Basic Manufactured Goods 60 tons	
105 tons left for freight, plus passengers:	
Freight 105 ton, 8 mid-psg, 9 low-psg.	
*Another trader is after the cargo (electronics?). Just before they arrive supplier messages them, tells them he sold it to someone else. Payment cancelled. PCs go round to the port office, confront him (it turns out other trader is the Cptn's rival!). Almost come to blows, but Cptn tries an Admin roll and threatens the seller with a loophole in commercial law.	
*As the ship is loaded, another cargo craft lands, damaged, attacked by an unknown vessel	
*Create NPC: Rival Trader, Nikos Vega.Ship called the Kali.	
<i>Take off and jump. Encounter small craft from Port Authority, ignore, but polite.</i>	<i>leaves Cr9,000</i>
<u>WEEK 2 – IN JUMP</u>	
Argument with Vella over paperwork and her refusal to work as a broker during trade meetings. Argument ends unresolved, like it began. Stalemate.	
*One of the passengers is a streetwise guy, maybe a criminal passenger extorting money from another. Blackmail? Cptn Lucklow confronts him, making a Streetwise roll to face him down. Luckily it works!	



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# 🗘 Z O L O

<u>WEEK 3 – SAKKARA</u>	
'Desert'-covered colony world, TL 3, ExoElements virtually run	Paid for deliveries:
the planet, puppet government.	+Cr138,000
	Sell cargoes:
Lucklow can't persuade Vella to help sell the cargoes during a heated argument in the lounge.	+Cr44,000
	+Cr69,000
Look for cargo away from port, Vella agrees to join Cptn. on desert expedition, after some reflection and a quiet discussion in the galley. Roll for Textiles (10 tons), Ore (20 tons), Basic Consumables (50 tons). Buy at discount.	<i>Pay ship costs (life supp, fuel, berthing) -Cr53,000</i>
	Buy cargoes:
Rewind: Need to travel to restricted are (owned by ExoElements) to meet with the native supplier. Need forged ID. Vella, Megan & Cptn. Avoid ExoElements patrol, their native	-Cr121,000
guide hides them in a village of locals. Turns out IDs are rubbish, useless. Exo sweep through village with APC and guns	Paid for mission:
checking up on reports of foreigners. Vella terrified, becomes close to Cptn. Will it last? Megan sulks. Do the deal, get back to the ship. Cargo (textiles) will follow in a day or two.	+Cr5000
	Leaves Cr91,000
Fill rest of hold 135 ton with freight, get passengers. As usual, no rolls, automatic.	
*Back at Sakkara Downport, meet contact who needs your help. Which skill? Admin. A corp exec, maybe from ExoElements who wants to frame a target working at the port who is a member of a local crime syndicate. He and Megan agree, sneak into an office, access a terminal and set him up. Get paid!	



### 

Prep the ship. Megan now upset, tries to poison him against Vella, but fails spectacularly producing opposite result. Cptn realises he must make it up to Vella and that he must get back with her.

Take-off and jump. No ship encounter.

<u>WEEK 4 – IN JUMP</u>

Accident! Injury, Sergei the navigator is involved in an accident, a fire in engineering. What was he doing there? Running calibration tests... malfunction. Megan patches him up.

Cptn discovers that Sergei was not doing calibration tests, which makes the incident suspicious, but Sergei is not admitting anything. Player does not know the reason – leave it hanging.

# 🗘 z o l o

Paid for deliveries:

+Cr158,000

WEEK 5 – CORONIS

Polluted, over-populated industrial world. One-giant city.

Encounter OB167, a 1000 ton cargo carrier near jump point Sell cargoes: that requests aid, just needs a particular tool for repairs. Cptn +Cr 23,000 obliges. OB167 now a contact. Vella volunteers to help with the repair. +Cr30,000 +Cr64,000 Pay end of month wages and maintenance bill!!!!!! Pay ship costs (life *supp, fuel, berthing)* -Cr53,000 Decide to look for cargo away from port in the hyperindustrialized auto-factory dominated Seven Sector ..... Wages+Maint Bill: Roll 54: goods available direct from manufacturer, roll for *-Cr21,000* cargo ... illegal cybernetics! Perfect! We can afford one ton. -Cr8,099 What do the crew think? Cptn is for it, all crew against it. Lets say he doesn't tell them its illegal .... Leaves 283,901 Meet a Contact. Lets say the Cptn of the OB167. Share a drink in a bar downtown. He is a native of Coronis, warns of the Buy cargo: cybernetics issue on the planet, the Self-Aware lobby and the rise of the AI government advisors. -Cr250,000 Take off- no encounter. jump! Leaves: Cr33,901

🗘 SOLO

### THE ROUTE

Choices for the setting of a Star Trader campaign are many. Since this is a trading game the area of space will probably need to be fairly civilised. Most of the sectors published for SF RPGs over the years will be perfectly suitable. The author has run his own games in some of the Classic subsectors as well as a number of scratch-built settings. Although you are not limited to a single subsector, it certainly helps to focus the game. One gets to know the trade codes of worlds off by heart and as the game picks up momentum and contacts are made they can be encountered again and again. Familiarity with the worlds, the stable of merchant ships and the NPCs that are being created begins to create a setting with an increasing level of depth. To skip out to the adjacent subsector does tend to spoil the effect, and to be honest you gain nothing new except the chore of starting the work of fleshing out planets and people all over again.

As you prepare for the game, scan the numbers of the UWPs for a few subsectors, and pay attention to the trade codes. You ideally want to select a subsector that has a good mix of trade codes within it. A good balance of all trade types is preferred so that, whatever you have bought on one planet, there is always a different type of trade code nearby to jump to and hopefully sell at a profit. With long strings of non-industrial worlds littering the trade routes, it will take the player most of the game just to get to a viable market!

This is not just a game of numbers, though. We want to feel like we are 'travelling' and so it is recommended that the player look over the UWPs of the subsector and put down a couple of notes on each world into a jotter. Long-winded write-ups aren't necessary. All we need to know are the basic facts: What is the climate like? What is it like to walk around on the surface? Are there any interesting places to stay? What kind of sightseeing is there to do? This is the kind of information you'd want to find out about a 3-day trip to Vancouver or a stop-over in Singapore. You're not interested in how the government is organized or the long and tortuous history of the place, you don't need names of all the cities or a detailed street map. Keep it simple - embellish were needed (particularly on your first visit!). Players might find the Zozer Games book Universal World Profile helpful in this regard. It is a step by step handbook to world creation for Cepheus Engine and other Classic SF RPGs. Don't expect a technical treatise on planetary physics, though. You won't be dealing with albedo values, Bode's Law or complex square root calculations to determine the length of the world's orbital period. Universal World Profile comes at world generation from another angle - from the perspective of plot. The aim of the book is to assist the Player in creating believable descriptions of his worlds. There is no set worksheet that must be slavishly filled in by the world creator because every planet will be unique.

For players not comfortable with this step, then skip it, or use a published subsector that has most of its worlds detailed to a large degree.



## 💭 SOLO

Here some examples:

#### Skoras D765657-3 Ri Ag Ga NI Lt

Primitive agricultural world. Big trading houses are local nobility who own vast mansions and forts in hostile areas. Mostly peaceful, but fierce tribes in the mountains threaten the bucolic and wealthy farming culture. Warm, Mediterranean climate. Stay in the lavish townhouses of your trading partners or the Roukofon, a castle now given over to visitors, serving as a hotel. It looms over the wealthy city next to the starport. Sightseeing: the exotic bazaars of the city, the Wafkeni Falls, vast cliffs that were once mighty waterfalls, Tou-Mou trees up in the mountains made of mirrored jet-black wood (watch out for tribal attacks).

#### Colchis A6369A5-D Hi Ht

Hi-tech, over-crowded world, an interstellar hub. Thin atmosphere, requires a respirator. Hundreds of sprawling cities connected by grav trains and grav flyers. Cool climate. Devoted to the 'Emperor', a political figure risen from an obscure military cult that went mainstream. His face appears everywhere, lots of places, things are named after him. Places to stay: Emperor Palace Hotel, built into a 200m statue of the man himself. Places to visit: Crash Site 41, a vast wrecking yard of ancient spacecraft; Tidal Communities, tens of thousands living on raised houses on the tidal flats in a sustainable way; and Kirrukax Maze, a sprawling temple hundreds of years old with a maze-like structure.

#### Malificent C6B199C-B FI Hi

Corrosive atmosphere, sulphuric acid? Yet there are a billion people here and a small starport. Let's say the 'people' are local intelligent lifeforms, the Opods, silicon based. The starport is an enclave that deals with Opods, and trades off-world materials they can't produce here for some rich material a valuable organic substance known as DXF. Stay at the Cave-Cut Hotel, with windows looking out over the dark, acid scarred landscape. Go out and see acid-carved river canyons, the Opod villages looking like strange rock formations, visit the rainbow lake – every colour you can imagine.

## 💭 zolo

## CHECKLIST

### PREGAME

- 1. Create merchant characters
- 2. Ensure characters have 3 Life Events
- 3. Create one PC relationship for each character
- 4. Assign a Starship
- 5. Assign starting funds Cr100,000 recommended
- 6. Assign a starting location

#### 1 - CARGO SEARCH

In the Star Trader campaign, searching for a cargo is one of the adventure elements. Make something of it and look for opportunities to expand on the situation. Unlike the core book we differentiate between looking for cargoes at the Starport and looking for them away from the Starport, the understanding is the starport cargoes are easy to find, but that goods located away from it are always cheaper because of the effort in getting them. The incentive is clear, get out and find cargos on the planet's surface!

#### How Long Does It Take?

- At the Starport 2 days per attempt
- Away From the Starport 3 days per attempt

#### How Easy is it?

*Finding a Supplier: Broker, Education or Social Standing, 2 or 3 days, Average (0) Finding a Black Market Supplier: Streetwise, Intelligence, 2 or 3 days, Difficult (-2)* 

DMs:	Type A starport	+6
	Type B starport	+4
	Type C starport	+2
	Type D,E starport	0

#### 2 - BUY CARGOES

Use the procedure in the core rulebook to buy the desired cargoes.

### Goods purchased Away From the Starport gain a -2 bonus on purchase price!

#### **3- WORLD ENCOUNTERS**

Whilst the character is on the search for his cargo, he will hopefully have an interesting time! Roll on the D66 table below and interpret the results. The player may decide that this table only applies if seeking a cargo Away From the Starport. Interpret the result in relation to the details of the world and use the task rules to resolve problems and have an adventure.


## 

#### D66 World Encounter

- 11 Crime. Roll UNDER law level to avoid a random non-lethal crime costing you Cr200 x 1D6.
- 12 Renowned restaurant
- 13 Sudden weather change may affect travel plans
- 14 Trade agents of a large megacorporation are on planet, making normal trade difficult.
- 15 Sudden restriction on movement, unless you can find a way to avoid it
- 16 Another trader is after your preferred lot of trade goods.
- 21 Invited to a posh function
- 22 Ruined structure holds your interest
- 23 Discover a landed spacecraft. Why is it there?
- 24 Interesting or potentially dangerous encounter with some local wildlife.
- 25 Local situation and manner of seller make you suspicious and consider rethinking your purchase.
- 26 Holiday or festival celebrations slow things down, but become an enjoyable diversion.
- 31 Seller involved in legal trouble and you risk getting embroiled
- 32 Community is either not what it seems, or very welcoming
- 33 Discover a wonderful little-known retreat, a place to relax or to hide.
- 34 Security check. Roll the Law Level or less to avoid a complete check of papers and a search of belongings and vehicle.
- 35 Patron offers you a short-term courier job to your next destination.
- 36 Transport delays
- 41 Hard times on the planet mean few trade goods for purchase
- 42 Valuable trade goods are on offer at a great deal. Why?
- 43 Harassed by a group of locals
- 44 Learn a secret on planet, political, corporate, etc. you can profit from this, if you decide. If so, roll Streetwise to get away with it and gain Cr10-60,000, fail and face being arrested, pursued or shipped off planet.
- 45 You need to travel to a restricted area and travel incognito with a forged ID. Goods will be more valuable (gain +1 bonus on the buying roll). If caught you will be sent back to the starport.
- 46 You are offered the chance to make extra money at a job lasting one day and paying Cr1000, or a favour.
- 51 Find yourself travelling with a group of interesting locals, gain useful information about the world and a tip (+1 to find a dealer) on this, or your next, visit.
- 52 Local crisis; bush-fire, earthquake, hurricane, rioting. If you have a cargo of particular use in the crisis you can sell for 3x the rolled price.
- 53 Investment opportunity arises on some local planetary business venture; you may gamble a multiple of Cr1,000 up to Cr10,000. Roll Gambler 8+ or Broker 8+ and if you succeed you gain half-again in profit, if you fail you lose your stake. The result occurs by the end of the week.
- 54 Goods are on offer direct from the grower/manufacturer. It is top quality stuff that will sell with a +1 bonus.
- 55 You are offered the chance to take part in a risky but rewarding adventure or expedition.
- 56 Introduced to local entertainments, spending hundreds of credits (Cr100 x 1D6) but gaining a friend and memories of a good time!
- 51 Job opportunity comes up that will last up to three days and pay Cr1000 plus 1D6 x Cr100.
- 62 You get ill. Roll 1D6, on 1-3 it is some bizarre local disease requiring an expensive local doctor who will cost you Cr600, otherwise you are bedridden each day till you successfully roll End 10+
- 63 You are approached to smuggle illegal goods off-planet. If you accept, roll Bribery 8+ to succeed. There may be other complications. If you refuse you may make an enemy of the smuggler.
- 64 Boom economy at the moment. This week, every dealer has three cargoes for you to choose from.
- 65 Embroiled in legal trouble. A lawyer with Admin 8+ roll will sort out the problem quickly, otherwise you may have to resort to bribery or other methods to get out of the situation.
- 66 Another off-worlder befriends you, they are in a spot of bother it soon transpires, would you help? There may be payment, or a favour.





### **4 - PAY WAREHOUSE FEES**

Pay warehousing fees for any cargoes bought and stored in previous weeks. Do not count any cargoes bought this week, the seller is paying for those. Cost is Cr10 per ton week.

### 5 – MEETING AN OLD FRIEND

Travellers meet other travellers. The player character collects acquaintances that are contacts or allies, met at starports or on starships during his or her travels. Keep a list of these contacts at the back of the diary. If the context of the first meeting (or the entry on the encounter table) does not give you a clue to the identity of an NPC contact then roll on the Patron Table in the Campaign:Travellers chapter.

### Meeting a Contact

Roll 10+ to meet one of the contacts from your list each week you are at a starport. They will be at the port all week should the PC need them.

Dice Modifiers: -1 if B class, -2 if C class, -3 if D class, -6 if E class +1 if your contact list has 3 or more entries, +2 if your contact list has 6 or more entries, +3 if your contact list has 9 or more entries.

Some contacts may be located at that particular port permanently and can be contacted if needed on a daily roll of 8+ (no DMs).

### 6 - PORT EVENT

Whether the Player is the owner of a starship or is a travelling speculator, time is spent at the starport, getting licences, paying port fees, checking cargos, seeing to refuelling, buying tickets and signing maintenance schedules, etc. It is likely that there will be some event or encounter of note, this may or may not be important and could have ramifications for an adventure – or not. Refer to the Starport Encounter Table earlier in this book.

### 7 - SEARCH FOR A SHIP

There are two rolls to make, the first to find a ship that is heading to your preferred destination and the second to determine how much cargo space it has available, if any.





### Available Starship Table (weekly roll)

2D	Starship Type	Maximum Cargo
2	Yacht	21 tons
3-4	Scout	3 tons
5-7	Free Trader/Far Trader	88 tons/64 tons
8	Subsidized Merchant	205 tons
9	Subsidized Liner	62 tons
10	Heavy Freighter	552 tons
11-12	Other large cargo ship	Up to 800 tons
Starport	t DMs: Type A or B Type C or D Type E or X	2 rolls/week -2 -5

Next, roll **2D** to determine availability of space in the ship's cargo hold.

DMs:	
Scout	-2
Yacht	-8
Free Trader/Far Trader	-4
Subsidized Merchant/Liner	-6
Heavy Freighter/Other Large Cargo Ship	-8

If the result is 0 then the ship, despite being a likely candidate, has no cargo space. If the result is 1+, then it has that number x10% of its cargo hold free. Cost to the speculator to ship cargo is Cr1,000 per ton, + Cr200 per additional parsec.

Note that in a frontier subsector, it is useful to write up a list of ship names with the names of their captains or owners. Riding the same ship will mean meeting the same crews and building relationships, having more long-running personal stories.

### 8 - FINALIZING DETAILS & SHIP ENCOUNTER

Cargo is loaded, the PC checks out, pays any outstanding bills at the starport and loads his or her luggage. For a starship captain, final cargoes are loaded, checks made and flight plan filed. The player may want to roll for a Space Encounter, See the Ship Encounter in the first half of this book.



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### 9 - ONBOARD EVENT (MERCHANT SHIP)

The ship travels to the destination desired. It requires one week and requires a roll on the Onboard Event table.

### d66 Encounter

- 11 Hijack or piracy or both
- 12 There is an incident amongst the crew and they turn to the PC for help.
- 13 What the problem is will probably revolve one of the PCs skills, status or situation.
- 14 An accident aboard ship requires repair, may involve an injury or some inconvenience.
- 15 Fire in the cargo area an electrical fault in the cargo bed rollers.
- 16 Demanding passenger is a friend of destination's port manager.
- 21 Passenger is an inspector for the government who will tour of the ship.
- 22 Crewman becomes sullen, uncommunicative and makes mistakes, but will not discuss.
- 23 Recycling systems require maintenance, it's a messy job.
- 24 Find out some useful info from a passenger about the destination world, use it to either get half price living costs at the starport, a +1 on any Admin roll, or reroll a cargo result during the Cargo Search phase.
- 25 Crew fresher is broken , the stateroom is flooded!
- 26 Jump field misaligning, requires spot retuning of the drive, very dangerous.
- 31 Cargo containers have shifted due to grav compensator malfunction. Need resetting.
- There's one obnoxious passenger people try to avoid. This trip will be miserable unless someone deals with him, which skill will work with him/her?
  (1) Streetwise, (2) Carousing, (3) Admin, (4) Bribery, (5) Leader, 6) Social Standing. Liaison is always appropriate.
- 33 Sensors are producing false readings. Or are they? If so, why?
- 34 Cargo container explosion and chemical fire.
- 35 Two passengers have a blazing and unresolved argument. It needs resolving!
- 36 A passenger shows too much interest in another, and attempts entry into his/her cabin.
- 41 Typical trip, with highs and lows.
- 42 Fuel pump fails reactor put on stand-by, something ingested during fuel scooping.
- 43 Power failure several tripped fuses, shuts down power in parts of engineering.
- 44 Meet one of your contacts who needs your help. Is it financial, legal, administrative or personal?
- 45 Passenger declares he has seen a gun in another passenger's stateroom.
- 46 A passenger falls mysteriously ill.
- 51 Security patrol ship makes contact in outer system or close to main world. (1) checks registry, moves on (2) asks for passenger lists, is looking for a fugitive (3) asks for cargo lists, is checking for customs irregularities, (4-5) will board, spend 1-3 hours conducting a routine search then move on. Roll 5+ for PC to avoid some cargo or personal irregularity which leads to his or her put under scrutiny/fined/delayed or detained (6) the starship is breaking the law and will be accompanied to the starport where it will be impounded and investigated. Can the PC help with bribery or admin or other skills in preventing this?? If not

everyone is detained at the starport for 1-3 weeks, cargos included. On a second roll of 10+ the panicked starship captain makes a run for it and the patrol ship will be forced to fire on the fugitive vessel.

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- 52 Crewman has an affair with a passenger.
- 53 Gambling passenger takes everyone's money and causes bother ...
- 54 Meet a fellow Traveller as a potential Contact. Roll on Traveller reaction table to make their acquaintance, roll on Patron table to determine their identity. Record the reaction result. Require a result of 8+ ('interested') for a friendship. When met again, roll reaction result or less for assistance, cheap cargo, help in dealing with a problem, etc.
- 55 Captain runs a crew training session on procedure/law/fire safety/hijacking/first aid etc.
- 56 Theft from a passenger stateroom or luggage area.
- 61 Captain is incapacitated, roll for a simultaneous event/crisis that needs resolving!
- 62 Engineering problem requires all crew to help replace a huge component.
- 63 Crewman has a crisis of doubt, failure of duty. He/she shuts down.
- 64 One of the stewards is: (1) rude, (2) corrupt, (3) missing, (4) exploitative, (5) thieving, (6) under pressure from a passenger.
- 65 Passenger is extremely reclusive, will not come out of his cabin.
- 66 Mysterious death of passenger or crew, was it murder?

### **10 - ARRIVE IN NEW SYSTEM**

Enter the new star system roughly 100 diameters from the main world. The player may want to roll for a Starship Encounter.

Approach, land, unload, cargo sale, arrange for accommodation for the week.

Return to 1.



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# Campaign: Naval Officers

Falling through space, it dropped like a stone, arcing gracefully around Panarchus. Thousands of objects were in orbit around this ghostly green planet, a gas giant clad in a methane and hydrogen fog. Asteroids, moons, rocky fragments, ice particles, the known and the unknown - and the Scorpion.

And another craft.

Shannick, hair tied back in a tight pony-tail, reviewed the sensor data once again. The bridge was dark, multi-coloured displays bathed the lieutenant in an upward rainbow of light.

"There's heat ... and power," she reported to Luvass, "and I estimate its displacement to be around 30 tons - a cutter or some kind, or ship's boat."

The Scorpion's captain leaned forward to stare at the screen. "Hail it ... "

As his exec attempted to contact the ship, Luvaas considered his target, rotated the image to study its orbital trajectory. The cutter had been parked in a perfect orbit around Panarchus, it was powered down, and it didn't seem to be responding to signals. Was this a vessel in distress? Or just miners on an EVA?

"Attention. We are about to begin an intercept with Target 045. Indications suggest 045 is a boat in need of assistance, or abandoned due to circumstances unknown. All crew to duty stations. Prepare for a routine intercept."

Scorpion twisted along its axis, drives glowed electric blue and the naval patrol ship began to accelerate silently out toward the drifting craft.

'A routine intercept?' thought Shannick, 'every intercept regularly threw up new situations and new hazards. Routine didn't exist in this line of work.'

045 would be anything but routine.

## THE INTERSTELLAR NAVY

No interstellar society, once established, can rest on its laurels. With such vast distances between star systems and the lack of any method of interstellar communication, the only practical way to ensure the security of member worlds is to send out patrol vessels. Hostile forces can roam at will if left unmonitored and unchecked, they might be pirates, smugglers, rebels, blockade runners or attack ships sent by rival interstellar governments. The depths of space, the outer reaches of the star system, certainly contain many hiding places and retreats for these hostiles and it is the purpose of the naval patrol to deny these areas to the enemy and to pursue, capture or destroy its ships. It is rarely the member worlds themselves that are at direct risk from piracy and enemy action, rather the commercial starships that ply the spacelanes between them. This shipping is the life-



blood of any interstellar society, the conduit for communication, prosperity and at times, even survival. Conflicts during Earth's own history show how effective a campaign against merchant shipping can be; German U-Boats in World War Two sank thousands of Allied cargo ships, almost bringing the island nation of Great Britain to its knees.



**Patrol Ships** 

The patrolling of star systems by small (400 ton) military vessels may seem a pointless exercise when the navy has at its disposal destroyers. battlecruisers. dreadnoughts and fleet carriers that are capable of annihilating most pirate vessels and tackling an invasion fleet on an equal footing. Patrols, however, are a critical part of naval strategy. While the 'big guns' wait it out at central locations, or conduct wargames and fleet exercises, the patrol ships criss-cross their assigned subsector. looking for trouble, sniffing out potential targets and reporting back to the naval chiefs. The patrol becomes familiar with the star systems and the activities within them, its presence provides immediate security for friendly vessels within the subsector and denies the enemy the ability to establish its own patrols. In peacetime the patrol ships are continuously checking the identity of starships, searching for smuggled contraband and ensuring that the subsector's merchant ships adhere to the law. Without the presence of the patrol, or the threat of its presence, interstellar traffic would in effect operate lawlessly - a perfect operating environment for pirates, smugglers and rebels; because of this, the government actively projects its power into every star system via the naval patrol.

Each subsector within the interstellar polity has its own naval fleet, containing battlecruisers, destroyers, escorts and so on. These fleets also operate a flotilla of between 10 and 20 patrol ships, usually organized into several patrol squadrons and each one of these squadrons is located at a separate naval base. Rarely do these ships exceed 400 tons, and the role is admirably filled by a close escort or a patrol. As is typical with ships of this size, where individual crews typically number less than twenty, ships are continually going out on to patrol, while crews are rotated between them. This rotation of crews is used by modern airlines, where the aircraft are continually 'on the go', as well as by the Royal Australian Navy, which rotates crews between its Armidale Class patrol boats. The crew of a patrol ship may well be the only agent of central government that exists in the frontier systems and the vessel's

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captain, typically a Lieutenant-Commander or Commander, may have to act autonomously on his government's behalf.

### Types of Patrol

Key tenets of any star patrol are as follows:

- Challenge any suspicious vessel board it if necessary
- Deal with any hazards to navigation
- Investigate any threat to the security of the subsector neutralize or report back as appropriate
- Assist as appropriate with any deep space rescues or emergencies

On a broader scale, there are three different patrol strategies, used as the circumstances dictate. These are the Fixed Station Patrol, the Multi-System Patrol and the Discretionary Patrol. A Fixed Station patrol involves the patrol ship jumping out to a target star system where it will remain, conducting patrol sweeps in-system, for the duration of its mission. Vulnerable systems are often the target of Fixed Station Patrols and so are those systems flagged up by naval intelligence as likely locations for future pirate activity. Red Zoned worlds are by their very nature, the site of Fixed Station Patrols.

Multi-System Patrols are perhaps the most common type, and involve a ship commander taking his vessel out along a designated patrol route, hopping from system to system, calling in at starports and bases as needed, checking ship registrations and searching out irregular or illegal activity. Enough spare time is built into the patrol schedule that a ship commander can loiter within a system beyond the usual 2-5 days if needed. It may be his crew have local intelligence that suggests pirate activity, or the ship may even be in pursuit of some criminal element, forcing it to remain in-system.

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Discretionary Patrols do not have a pre-arranged route, the ship commander does not file a flight plan and he is allowed to take his ship out to any part of the subsector he feels will most benefit from its presence. Only he knows where the patrol will go and surprise is retained, and should the captain change his mind or encounter a promising lead, he can drop his initial plans and react to circumstances within the subsector has he sees fit. Naturally, only experienced patrol commanders are given the freedom of a Discretionary Patrol, and certainly not all of the time. Naval top brass can use this type of deployment to test the mettle of a commander who is up for promotion, and through a detailed debriefing, can ascertain how well he used his time, his ship and his crew, where he went and what he did. Did he make the best use of his resources? Did he have good reasons for making his decisions, and did they bear fruit?





### Organization

A typical patrol flotilla will be divided into four squadrons, each containing five patrol ships. Although that would suggest a squadron maintains five crews with which to man those ships, in fact the squadron mains six crews, allowing crews to carry out training, enjoy R&R and hand over ships to new crews. From the perspective of a patrol crew, its schedule might look like this:

- 1 month at base, with plenty of R&R
- 5 months active duty aboard ship

With this schedule there will be a patrol cruiser dropping out of jump space close to the naval base once a month. Once it has docked the crew spend the next week in debrief and in getting the new crew up to speed with the ship and any problems it may have thrown up. Following this week of 'working up', the patrol ship sets off on its next cruise with a new crew, and a new captain in command. It will return in five months time. Actually, the deployment will aim to finish one week short of five weeks (nineteen weeks) in order that the crew has that final week on base, handing over the ship, carrying out minor repairs and conducting an inventory. Many bases are fitted with a simulator of the main patrol ship components so that crews not on deployment can train on new systems or procedures, prior to their next cruise.

Ideally, a subsector fleet admiral wants to allocate one patrol squadron to a single naval base, ensuring a wide coverage across the subsector, but often this is not possible. If there are only one or two naval bases, then the squadrons will have to double up, sharing the base. Squadron personnel may get on well with crews from other squadrons and work as a larger team, or they may engage in a cut-throat rivalry that threatens to jeopardize the orderly running of the station!

Normally, a ship the size of a patrol cruiser or close escort would be commanded by a competent Lieutenant. Due to the long duration of missions, however, and the autonomy enjoyed by the captains, most patrol ships are commanded by Lieutenant-Commanders or Commanders and the squadron is led by an experienced Commander. The flotilla itself never comes together, even in wartime, and so there is no officer in charge of this administrative unit. The naval bases themselves are commanded by Captains with a Fleet Admiral in overall command of the subsector fleet (of which the patrol flotilla forms a part).

On board ships with such small complements, the rank structure is truncated. There are no elaborately staffed departments - the patrol ship just about manages to have someone on watch at all times. In command of the ship is the captain, typically a Lieutenant Commander. Not only is he the captain, but he is also the pilot, just as the captain of USAF jet bomber or a commercial airliner is also the senior pilot. His executive officer is a Lieutenant, similarly trained, with piloting and navigation expertise. Both men work closely together. Next in the chain of command are the chief engineer and the chief gunner; both are probably Chief Petty Officers, since they command a small team and one or both can stand watch, giving the two officers a break from the bridge during routine flight or while in orbit. If the ship has a medic on board then that position is likely to be filled by an Able Spacehand or a Petty Officer. The gunners and engineers of the ship will be naval ratings, usually Able



Spacehands, although there may be a Petty Officer amongst them who can deputize as the chief gunner or engineer.

With limited numbers of crewmen available, duties aboard ship will often be shared between everyone. Routine maintenance, damage control, ad hoc boarding or landing parties, deputations, large maintenance operations, cleaning, food preparation and emergency procedures will often involve everyone at one point or another.

With a thud the locks retracted and the gig floated free from the back of Scorpion. Stearman completed the launch checklist and ignited the drive, while engineers Vallero and Shinju tightened their seat restraints, checked the gauges on their vacc suits and cycled their carbines. Shannick sat behind them, she was to lead the boarding party, leaving Commander Luvass and the rest of the crew back on the Scorpion to monitor the situation.

Scorpion was too small to have its own complement of marines - when customs checks were required, a team was assembled from the modest gunnery and engineering crew.

045 was a blinking yellow light in the black vacuum. Below, a white field of ice filled the view. The target sat above Panarchus' impressive ice ring and the harsh glare filled the gig's cramped cockpit.

200 metres ... 100 metres ... 50 metres ... It certainly was an old mining boat, now slowly rotating and lit only with a single flashing navigation light. "Scorpion, can you see what we are looking at? She has no interior lights, but a single cargo door is wide open."

"Shannick, you are authorized to carry out an EVA. Make the cargo door your point of entry. Understood?"

Vallero was first across, the silence of his suit intercom filled with the hiss of his life support system. Shannick and Shinju waited at the gig's airlock for the engineer to secure a tether between the two craft. It looked like spider silk in the void. Vallero's suited figure moved clumsily, and with one hand on the attached tether, he swung into the unlit darkness of the open cargo bay.

A sudden flash of light forced a shocked cry from Lieutenant Shannick. She covered her faceplate for a moment, and when she brought down her gloved hand looked across at a wreck. The mining boat was now twisted and smashed, spinning crazily and thousands of fragments were hurtling out from the wreck in an expanding cloud of debris.

Target 045 had been rigged to explode.



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### The Solo Patrol Campaign

Running a military patrol game is very different from the more traditional type of roleplaying activity. Where others can decide on the spot where they want to go or what they want to do, the players in a patrol campaign are a little more restricted – but the rewards of patrolling the interstellar spaceways are certainly worth it! Of course the type of ship that the group uses will be different, but there are also other important changes. The Player must follow a set encounter procedure as they pursue the goals of the mission – this encounter procedure provides the meat of the game, it is what the patrol does and will throw up some exciting adventure opportunities. The crew themselves will all be members of the navy, this is a military campaign, with a captain, a chain of command and rules and regulations. On such a small boat, however, a much more informal arrangement will be at work, and when it comes to gaming around the table, the players will not find being enlisted (or commissioned!) that much different from being a member of a free trader crew.

### The Crew

It is recommended that the Player create his or her PC group out of the role of senior crewmen from the patrol ship. The rest of the crew, probably the gunners and engineers should be played as NPCs. In such an enclosed and remote environment the Player needs to have some influence on events and a say in the game, he does this by retaining control of the rest of the crew. The senior crewmen are listed here:

Role	Rank	Responsibilities
Pilot/Captain	Lieutenant Commander (O4)	Mission commander and ship pilot
Navigator/Executive	Lieutenant (O3)	Navigator, co-pilot and second-in- command
Chief Gunner	Chief Petty Officer (E7)	Tactical specialist and leader of the gunnery team
Chief Engineer	Chief Petty Officer (E7)	Experienced ship engineer, running the systems, maintaining the ship and leading the engineering team
Medic	Petty Officer (E5)	Paramedic and ship's doctor
Squad Leader	Sergeant (E5)	NCO who leads the boarding party of marines onto suspect vessels. Not all patrol ships have marines on board.

Cepheus Engine uses a randomized character generation system which will probably create a naval character that does not fit any of the crew positions listed above! In order to finish the character creation process with one of the available crewmen, then, the Player has to add a couple of steps to the process. Here are some guidelines:



- 1) Select a crew position from those available.
- 2) Begin to create characters by using the Navy career; enlistment is automatic.

- 3) Survival. There is no need of a survival roll since all players will remain in the service until they reach their target rank (although it may be helpful to make the roll in order to see how perilous the last four years have been).
- 4) Rank. Players can try for promotion as normal, but must stop the process when rank is achieved for that particular crew position.
- 5) Commission. Only the navigator and pilot try for a commission. Award a commission during the 3<sup>rd</sup> term if they have not yet received one.
- 6) Skill Selection. Make every other randomized skill roll a player selection. This enables the player to help build the character that fits the role he has chosen, but still throws up random skills that he might not otherwise have thought of. Gunners should probably steer clear of engineering skills and engineers make a conscious decision not to select gunnery skills. Remember to roll for a skill when creating a character, then alternate next time by choosing a skill from an appropriate table.
- 7) Mustering Out. There is no mustering out, everyone still works for the Navy. To create a crewman's available cash, roll 1D6, and multiply by Cr 500 if non-commissioned, or by Cr 1200 if commissioned.
- 8) Skill Packages. With such a tight focus on characters, there is no need for a skill package to be shared out amongst characters. However, if the Player wants to go for a truly randomized skill selection, then go ahead and then share out the skills from this Navy Patrol skill package before play is joined:

**Navy Patrol Skill Package:** Pilot 1, Navigation 1, Engineering 1, Gunnery 1, Comms 1, Medicine 2

### The Ship

Naval patrol operations require a certain type of military ship and in Cepheus Engine the most suitable are the 300-ton Corvette, the 800-ton Destroyer and the 300-ton Patrol Frigate. The Light and Heavy Cruisers require a larger crew and because of that are not suitable for SOLO campaigns. All of these ships are the kind of craft an interstellar power would use to patrol its spacelanes and star systems. Once a ship has been selected for use in the game the Player should familiarize himself with its capabilities. A printed deckplan will come in useful, if one can be found. The ship also requires a name that befits a naval predator - can the Player think of one?

### The Mission

A Naval Officers game should begin at the naval base with the crew assembled and the patrol ship ready to go. The Player acts as the captain, exec and intelligence briefing officer. In front of him will be ship specifications for his vessel as well as a subsector map for the area of operations (AoA). The Player, playing the part of an intelligence briefing officer, or of the crew's flotilla commander will run through any



recent events over the past four weeks, have there been any hostile attacks, sightings or encounters? Are there any dangers or hazards, are there any rumours or reports of missing ships? This is an opportunity for the Player to lay the groundwork for a scenario that will run through the patrol, or form one important encounter. The game is designed to 'run itself' with random encounters throwing up challenges that the Player must react to and deal with.

The subsector map shows the worlds within the subsector, marked out in discrete hexes. The Player (acting as the briefing officer) should mark one or more of these worlds with a colour-coded security rating:

**RED** – This is a Red Zone, as per the normal Traveller rules. The crew should be aware that there may be a risk that blockade runners and smugglers will attempt to land on the world.

**BLUE** – This is a system known to have experienced periods of enemy activity, either brief scouting missions or larger and more aggressive attacks. In Fleet Patrol, the enemy craft, and the enemy in general, are termed 'hostiles'. The actual identity of the hostiles depends on the nature and location of the players' game. Depending on where and when it is set, the hostiles be raiders from a neighbouring interstellar state or alien race.

**BLACK** – Black hexes represent areas known to be used by pirates and smugglers.

Every hex of concern has a monthly Threat Level roll 1d6-3 (throwing up results between 0 and 3, but tending toward 0) that can be marked on the subsector map. Refer to the Threat Level Table for a more detailed description. Threat Levels can be summarized as following:

1D6	Threat Level	Notice to Ship Commanders
1-3	0	Caution
4	1	Expect Trouble
5	2	Action Required
6	3	Urgent Action Required

Threat Levels will increase the likelihood of a hostile encounter within a system. Once the map has been studied by the crew, the players can then decide on the route that their patrol should take. Note that Red, Blue and Black systems have seen hostile activity in the past but remember that White hexes (those that are unmarked and peaceful) could still see enemy activity. The patrol might be just in time to stop a pirate takeover of a free trader in one corner of a White system. Do not neglect the unmarked White hexes.

Between them, the players should now plan their patrol route. It should be more than 3 jumps, but less than 10 jumps. Assume that a typical jump and short in-system patrol will normally require 2 weeks (1 week in jumpspace and 1 week on a short patrol). It will last six months regardless with additional in-system patrol time taking



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up a good portion of this. Captain and crew should leave lots of weeks spare in their patrol plan so that they can stay on in a system, exploring further, following up on reports or rumours, as they see fit.

*Example*: A six month (24 week) patrol is being planned that will pass through nine systems, returning to base in a loop. The crew estimate that the minimum time needed for this nine system patrol will be 18 weeks (9 x 2 weeks). This plan retains the flexibility of an additional 6 weeks that can be used as needed anywhere along the route.

Inside the naval gig, warning lights strobed furiously. Vacuum, caused by an explosive decompression, muted the wail of a dozen critical alarms.

"Shannick to Scorpion. We are back on board. Hull decompression. It looks like the main ignition systems also took a hit," Able Spacehand Shinju tapped the auxiliary system panel and gave the lieutenant a thumbs up, "but it looks like we might be able to bypass the worst of it."

Engrossed in trying to return the gig's drive to operation, pumped with adrenaline and encumbered by space suits, neither crewman noticed the sensor screen tracking two approaching objects.

Chief Engineer Olaru sat on the bridge with Commander Luvaas. Their immediate impulse had been to render assistance, to take Scorpion in to recover the gig and rescue the boarding party. But Luvaas had delayed, anxiously scanning the scopes for other activity. He did not have to wait long. "There!" called out Olaru, stabbing a finger at the inner moon of Panarchus. "Two vessels accelerating rapidly, closing on the gig."

Luvass stared at the deck plate, rubbed his chin, considered his next move. How was he going to pull glory out of this snafu? He'd fallen for a pirate trap intended for bumbling free traders or salvage crews who were hoping to get rich quick. These marauders had laid their bait close to a well used refuelling stop and had hidden their attack craft from sensors by parking them on the inner moon. Yet ... he'd kept Scorpion at extreme range, sending in the gig to conduct the rescue, and it appeared as if the pirates were unaware of the loitering patrol ship. Well, weren't they in for a surprise ...?



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### CHECKLIST

### PREGAME

- 1. Create characters
- 2. Ensure characters have 3 Life Events
- 3. Create one PC relationship for each character
- 4. Decide which star systems have a colour-coded security rating as well as a monthly threat level.
- 5. Decide on a patrol route between 4 and 10 jumps, that returns to the initial naval base starting location.

### JUMPING FROM WORLD TO WORLD

- 1. Roll on the Starport Encounters table prior to lift-off.
- 2. Roll for on the Starship Encounters table.
- 3. Roll on the Onboard Events table (Military). Roll each PC's Reaction table too, how are they feeling about one another or the event?
- 4. Entering a new system. Decide on the entry point in the target star system.
- 5. Determine the number of sensor returns for that area of space.
- 6. Decide which blips to investigate and in what order. Assume 15 minutes for identification of all blips. Rendezvous with a target (for boarding or combat) requires 1 hour.
- 7. Choices: Stay in the location (refresh the Number of Sensor rolls after 24 hours); Move to another location in system, or; Jump to the next world on the route.
- 8. If in the Inner System, the ship can make a landing at the mainworld starport, requiring one full day. Roll on the Starport Encounters table.

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9. Jump to the next planet on the patrol route.



### ONBOARD EVENTS - MILITARY

#### **D66 Event** Ship Malfunction 11-16 21 Contraband found, unidentified 22 Identified contraband 23 Crewman receives bad news 24 Crewman receives very good news 25 **Bullying issue** Poor standards of duty or dress 26 31 Shipboard Training 32 Crew performance poor 33 Crewman saves another's life 34 Insubordination 35 Incident of fighting 36 Illness 41 Mistakes made on duty 42 Shipboard Training Conflicting personalities cause problems 43 44 Award or decoration due In-ship Competition 45 46 Crew entertainment evening 51 Shipboard Training 52 Item stolen 53 Cross training course established 54 Holiday or commemoration celebration 55 Poor timekeeping, persistent 56 Injury Food spoils, emergency rations! 61 62 Crewman AWOL on world/station Crewman completed some tests/experiments 63 64 Shipboard romance 65 Rivalry turns into bitter feud 66 Sabotage or wounding, who & why?

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### STAR SYSTEM ENCOUNTERS

Naval patrol ships enter normal space at a location selected by the commander and navigator prior to the jump. There are four main options:

**Fringe/Oort Cloud** – The extreme edge of a star system, the Fringe or Oort Cloud, is a tenuous widely dispersed scattering of comets, asteroids, dust clouds and dwarf planets. No-where in the Oort Cloud is close to anything else... you really want to be alone if you get out this far. Patrollers are probably following up a lead for them to spend their valuable time out in this empty wasteland.

**Outer System** – The outer system, away from the gas giants routinely used by refuellers is a less travelled zone. There is little out here. There may be dwarf planets, asteroid belts, comets, rarely visited gas giants and the like.

**Gas Giant** – Some gas giants, the Hot Jupiters (or 'epistellar Jovians') orbit within the Inner System. Here we are talking about the cold gas giants thriving out beyond the habitable zone and the Inner System. Such gas giants are often exploited by commercial traffic as a fuel stop, with starships skimming hydrogen fuel in a maneuver that requires several hours. Pirate activity is highest at such locations, far from the busy shipping lanes of the Inner System, and providing suitable sensor cover in the form of rings and moons.

**Inner System** – Most mainworlds (and therefore most space traffic) will be located within the Inner System, which includes the Habitable Zone and several orbits beyond it. This is the most likely place to spot scheduled traffic. Pirates and raiders have good chance of encountering a target here – but a commensurately large chance of being detected and challenged!

Once within a location, the patrol ship will remain there for 5 or 6 days to conduct a short patrol, scanning space for active sensor returns. It can then make its scheduled jump to the next world on the patrol route or remain in system. Perhaps the commander suspects illegal activity is going on or he or she simply wants to move to another part of the system. Moving from one location is abstracted in SOLO.PCs must move from the Inner System out, or from the Fringe inwards, adding up the travel times. It is assumed that sensor sweeps are carried out whilst the ship maneuvers to its next location. As a SOLO Player, try to keep the patrol times to lengths of about one week for ease of calculation. Use the following travel times (assuming a patrol ship with a 3G drive):



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Initial Location	In-System Destination				
	Inner System	Gas Giant	Outer System	Fringe	
Inner System	-	2 days	3 days	6 days	
Gas Giant	3 days	-	3 days	5 days	
Outer System	3 days	2 days	-	3 days	
Fringe	6 days	5 days	3 days	-	

### **Rolling For An Encounter**

Each star system has a **basic encounter chance** based on port size:

Starport	Number of Sensor Returns
A,B	1D blips
C,D	1D-2 blips
E,X	1D-3 blips

Apply these DMs:

Fringe	Always only 1D-5
Outer System	-2
Gas giant.	0
Inner System.	0

### **Investigating the Sensor Returns**

Most sensor returns (or 'blips') will be instantly verifiable and have transponders, others will need interrogating or investigating in any order the crew decide.

Use a shuffled deck of cards. Draw cards face up equal to number of blips. Cards dealt represent different categories of ship encounter: **Red** represent scheduled commercial traffic as well as friendly military craft. **Clubs** represent private vessels. They are probably legit, they have transponders, but are private, free traders, yachts, naval, scouts, unscheduled vessels. **Spades** represent unknown responses, perhaps hostile craft, wrecks, or malfunctioning ships. Red ships can be ignored. Clubs can be investigated as desired. Spades are the top priority. Assume 15 minutes for identification of all blips. Rendezvous with a target (for boarding or combat) requires 1 hour.

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The patrol ship captain can deal with these encounters in any order or any way that he sees fit. Obviously the scheduled traffic poses little threat and is of minor concern. Scheduled traffic cards can be safely put to one side. Should the PCs want to know more specifics about the scheduled traffic, the Player can roll 3D6 to determine the exact nature of the vessel. Private vessels, also, can be checked in this way with a 3D6 roll, providing the patrol ship with the nature and identity of the target craft. An





accompanying roll on the Ship Secrets table will add scenario hooks and complications that may require the intervention of the patrol ship. Ship secrets are designed to muddy the field, and provide opportunities for rescue and intervention.

Unknown target responses (**spades**) are virtually all adventure seeds and will require direct intervention of some kind by the patrol ship crew. In low threat systems, or within the inner zone of a star system, the unknown encounters may be simply space junk or ships in trouble. However, in high threat systems, or beyond the safety of the inner planets, the unknown responses are likely to be hostile! The Player should roll on the Unknown table to determine the exact nature of the encounter. The situation should be resolved by roleplaying and/or space combat from that point on.



## 💭 S O L O

3D6	PRIVATE TRAFFIC 🛧	3D6	SCHEDULED TRAFFIC + V
3	Shuttle	3	Shuttle
4	Corporate Liner	4	Subsidized Merchant
5	Salvage Ship	5	X-Boat Service Ship
6	Free Trader	6	Shuttle/Launch
7	Shuttle/Launch	7	Free Trader
8	Lab Ship	8	Subsidized Merchant
9	Cargo Carrier Charter	9	Destroyer
10	Scout	10	Bulk Cargo Hauler
11	Free Trader	11	Passenger Liner
12	Yacht or Safari Ship	12	Fighter
13	Survey Ship	13	General Cargo Ship
14	Mining Barge	14	Frigate or Patrol Ship
15	Mercenary Transport	15	Passenger Liner
16	Mining Support Ship	16	System Defence Boat (SDB)
17	Prospector	17	X-Boat Service Ship
18	Scout	18	General Cargo Ship
19	Free Trader	19	Cruiser or Battleship
20	Private Security Ship	20	Military Carrier with Escorts

+2 OUTER SYSTEM

3D6	UNKNOWN	TRAFFIC	♠
<u>^</u>	<u> </u>	CC 14	

- 3 Scheduled ship off its normal route. Why?
- 4 Scout on top secret business
- 5 Ship in catastrophic crisis fire, fuel leak, etc.
- 6 Transport ship with wrong transponder codes. Why are they wrong?
- 7 Malfunctioning drone of some kind
- 8 Scheduled ship off its normal route. Due to an error.
- 9 Stolen transport ship transponder codes are slightly irregular.
- 10 Small asteroid with attached mining beacons, or prospectors on-site
- 11 Ship damaged comms out
- 12 Satellite or beacon not responding
- 13 Dumped debris of no worth
- 14 Dumped debris including item/s with active power sources
- 15 Lifeboat coasting. Anyone, or thing, onboard?
- 16 Hostile scout
- 17 Dumped cargo, why was it dumped? What is it?
- 18 Hostile raider on patrol
- 19 Hostile attack underway, roll for identity of private/scheduled vessel

- 20 Wrecked ship, victim of pirate attack
- 21 Hostile ship, loading booty onboard
- 22 Ship fragments and frozen bodies, victims of an attack
- 23 Hostile squadron
- 24 Survey Ship with special sensor arrays
- 25 Hostile Carrier
- 26 Dumped cargo, why was it dumped? What is it?



+6

+2

### **Unknown Traffic Dice Modifiers:**

THREAT LEVEL 1 THREAT LEVEL 2 THREAT LEVEL 3 OUTER SYSTEM

- [Expect Trouble] [Action Required] +2
- +4
  - [Urgent Action Required]

#### D66 SHIP SECRETS

11	Ship has been hijacked	31 All the crew are ill
12	Ship being used for opportunistic piracy	32 No crew board why?
13	Ship wanted for crime out- system	33 Stolen goods are in the cargo hold
14	Cargo problem. Assistance required!	34 No licence, paperwork out of date
15	Ship wanted for crime in-system	35 Crew have found some valuable junk
16	Captain unstable, crew about to mutiny	36 Hostile scout, identifying possible targets
21	Crew have rescued a lifeboat survivor	41 Smuggled goods onboard, hidden
22	Very overdue for maintenance checks	42 Crew report seeing unusual ship activity
23	Ship in trouble – malfunction	43 Ship has attacked a suspected pirate
24	Ship damaged	44 Crewman or passenger is a wanted criminal
25	Hostage incident onboard	45 All crew in low berths why?
26	Crewman very ill	46 Drug use rampant on board
		51- This ship is normal 66



### **Example of Patrol Encounters:**

The Scorpion jumps into the Ubar system (Ubar D330656-6 Desert, Poor, Non Industrial). This is a backwater world with a D-type starport. The Scorpion drops out of jumpspace near the system's gas giant, it is a popular location for refuelling, since Ubar itself has no lakes or oceans. We roll 1D-2 for radar blips and discover that the navigator has detected three. We draw three cards and deal spades-7, spades-ace and hearts-jack. Fifteen minutes of analysis tells the PCs on the bridge that the jack is a bulk cargo hauler going (I roll a D6) out to a jump point. The other two sensor returns are spades – unknown traffic. The crew decide to investigate the spades-7 blip and begin an hour long manoeuvre to intercept and get within a more effective scanner range. A roll on the Unknown traffic table tells us that it is in actual fact a scheduled ship off its normal route due to an error in navigation. We roll on the Ship Reaction table to flesh out any communications that the captain has with the scheduled ship (let's quickly roll for that ship – it is a 400-ton cargo liner). On the Reaction table I happen to roll 17 – the ship is a: 'Hijacked vessel, unusual trajectory/callsigns'. What a co-incidence! Now we have an adventure ...

Of course the captain and crew of the Scorpion don't yet know that the ship is hijacked, that must come out in play. Perhaps our PCs decide to assist, offering to repair the ship's nav-system. That triggers an unusually hostile response which alerts the crew to a hijack or some other unusual activity. Scorpion insists on boarding. The hijackers can't really escape and so must plot some kind of response once the Scorpion docks alongside.

The Player makes a Plan. Who are you sending across? What are their duties, what eventualities will you try to anticipate? We forget about the third Unknown Traffic blip – this is after all an adventure generator, and we have found our adventure! Should the Plan end well, with success, the hijackers are killed or apprehended and the ship handed back to its crew. If the Plan should fail then perhaps docking was thwarted by the hijackers opening fire on the Scorpion with the merchantman's beam lasers. This replaces the Plan with a short bout of starship combat, an unhappy prospect, since there are presumably innocent civilians onboard. Hopefully the damage inflicted on the cargo ship will only disable it.

### RESOLVING PROBLEMS

The Player should not forget that the Naval Officer campaign is still a roleplaying game and not a wargame. Use the previous sections in SOLO to adjudicate scenario elements, in particular the Plan. Do not neglect the Tell Me, D6 mechanic too, which can throw a spanner into the works and really mess up a 'routine' spacewalk or other activity.

Let's look at a couple of encounters. The first is a free trader with no licence and out of date paperwork. As the Player, you could pass this by ... but come on, if you were a State Trooper or motorway traffic cop, you're going to investigate further! The Player decides to dock and search the ship. Using the D6 mechanic, the Player comes up with three 'interesting' options: the crew have hijacked or stolen the ship; the ship is supposed to be wrecked and the insurance paid out; and the crew are

## 🗘 S O L O

pirates who use a stolen ship to lure their victims in. Roll the dice, determine the 'truth' then move on...

What will the PC do next? Use the Plan. The results of the Plan will tell you about the outcome and you can then describe the events that occurred.

A second encounter might involve a ship on fire, in real crisis. Again, details are scarce so the Player must dream up two or three different scenarios on a whim. You might want to include a 'boring' option, particularly if you want a break from toe-to-toe combat! In this case 'boring' might be that a supply of textiles from an agricultural world that has caught fire and the onboard sprinklers have malfunctioned (or were they sabotaged...?). Either direct your crew to carry out certain acts (dock with the shuttle, carry out an EVA, help with fire-fighting, oversee decompression of the cargo deck) with a Tell Me, D6 roll to spice things up; or use a Plan.

Of course, don't neglect the Starport Encounters and also the World Encounters should the crew be forced either through a mission, or through some time on leave, to travel away from the starport. Don't bother with the Ship Encounter rules after first leaving port, the system here in this campaign variant supersedes that. You may find that the Ship Reactions tables hold some extra surprises, though. Roll on them if you feel a little stuck for ideas once a Private or Scheduled Ship is encountered.

The Ship Secrets are there for roleplaying opportunities, making friends and contacts, carrying out risky activities, assisting friendlies, etc. The Unknown Traffics are mainly (but not all) combat encounters. Certainly, many of the Unknown results will involve space combat at some stage... which brings us on to All-in-One Space Combat.

### ALL-IN ONE SPACE COMBAT

Assessment Table
------------------

1G Drive	+1
2G Drive	+2
3-4G Drive	+3
5-6G Drive	+4
Single Turrets	+1
Double Turrets	+2
Triple Turrets	+3
Over 10 Turrets	+2
One or more 50 ton Bays	+4
One or more 100 ton Bays	+5
Over 4 Bays	+2
Sandcasters	+1
Particle Accelerators	+1
Fusion Guns	+1
Meson Guns	+2
Computer 4+	+1
Computer 7	+1
Armour 2-4	+1
Armour 6-10	+2
Armour 12+	+3
Nuclear Damper	+1
Meson Screen	+1

This system is a distilled rules variant of the space combat found in Cepheus Engine and other 2D6based SF RPGs. In many ways it resembles the Plan, it is an aggregated rules mechanic which provides the Player simply with the outcome of the fight. As with the Plan, the Player can then narrate or explain what occurred.

### Assessment

First assess the spacecraft to create a single Combat Rating (CR). This assessment is designed to provide a rough guide to the power and potential combat ability of a starship, not to track every weapon and fitting. Assessment can even be done during construction, with the CR left on the construction sheet.

### Combat

When ships engage in combat, the attacker (for that turn) must compare his CR to the CR of his target. This comparison gives a target number that must be rolled equal to or above with 2D6, and if successful a hit is scored. Once it is determined that a hit has been made, check the result of the target roll to see how much damage was done. The damage table in Mongoose Traveller is used to determine damage.

Comparison Table		
Ratio	Target Number (2D)	
Enemy CR Quadruple or	12+	
Over Yours		
Enemy CR Triple or Over	11+	
Enemy CR Double or Over	10+	
Enemy CR Over Yours	8+	
Enemy CR Equal to Yours	7+	
Enemy CR Under Yours	6+	
Enemy CR Half or Less	5+	
Enemy CR 1/3 or Less	4+	
Enemy CR ¼ or Less	3+	

Ship Damage Table		
Target Roll	Damage Inflicted	
Roll Target Number	Single Hit	
Exactly		
Roll 2 more	Two Single Hits	
Roll 3 more	Double Hit	
Roll 4 more	Three Single Hits	
Roll 5 more	Two Single Hits, Double	
	Hit	
Roll 6 more	Two Double Hits	
Roll 7 more	Triple Hit	
Roll 8 more	Triple Hit, Single Hit	
Roll 9 more	Triple Hit, Double Hit,	
	Single Hit	
Roll 10 more	Two Triple Hits	

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### **Examples of Combat Ratings:**

- A 100-ton **scout ship** with a 2G drive, Model 2 computer, no armour and sporting a triple turret that is fitted with two pulse lasers and a missile rack, would have a CR of 5.
- A 400-ton **system defence boat** with a 6G drive, 8 points of armour, Model 2 computer, and sporting four triple turrets, two armed with missile launchers, the others armed with beam lasers would have a CR of 9.
- An unarmed 10-ton **launch**, with a 1G drive and a Model 1 computer has a CR of 1.
- A 10-ton **fighter**, with a 6G drive, a Model 1 computer and a single beam laser has a CR of 5.
- A 1200-ton **light cruiser**, with a 4G drive, 6 points of armour, a Model 7 computer, twelve triple turrets sporting a mix of missile racks and beam lasers and particle accelerators would have a CR of 12.
- A 200-ton **trading ship**, with a 1G drive, Model 1 computer and two double turrets fitted with pulse lasers has a CR of 3.





### Damage

Systems can take a variable number of hits before being destroyed, depending on the system in question. A ship can endure one point of Hull damage per fifty tons, rounding down. A ship that runs out of Hull Damage will rapidly be incapacitated. A ship can endure one point of Structure damage per fifty tons, rounding down to a minimum of one. A ship that runs out of Structure breaks up and is completely destroyed.

The effects of damage are determined by how close the attack roll was to the target number needed to hit. For a hit, roll on the Hit Location table, below. Small craft use the Small craft column. Vessels of 100 tons or larger use the External Hit (Vessel) column until a ship has suffered enough damage to wipe out its Hull, and then uses the Internal Hit (Vessel) column. A double hit applies two hits to the same location. A triple hit applies three hits to the same location.

2D6	External Hit (Vessel)	Internal Hit (Vessel)	Small Craft
2	Hull	Structure	Hull
3	Sensors	Power Plant	Power Plant
4	M-Drive	J-Drive	Hold
5	Turret	Bay	Fuel
6	Hull	Structure	Hull
7	Armor	Crew	Armor
8	Hull	Structure	Hull
9	Fuel	Hold	Turret
10	M-Drive	J-Drive	M-Drive
11	Sensors	Power Plant	Crew
12	Hull	Bridge	Bridge

**Hull** - Reduce the ship's Hull by one. If a ship's Hull is 0, then apply the hits to the location in the same row of the Internal Damage column.

**Structure** - Reduce the ship's Structure by one. If a ship's Structure is reduced to 0, the ship is destroyed.

**Armor** – Reduce the ship's armor by one. If the ship's armor is already 0, then this counts as a Hull hit.

Turret - A random turret is hit.

*First Hit:* The turret's tracking mechanism is damaged. It can still be used, but all attacks suffer a -2 DM.

Second Hit: The turret and all weapons in it are disabled.

*Third Hit*: The turret and all weapons in it are destroyed.

Subsequent Hits: Count as Hull hits.

**Bay -** A random bay is hit. *First Hit:* The bay's targeting mechanism is damaged. It can still be used, but all attacks suffer a –2 DM. *Second Hit:* The bay weapon is disabled.

*Third Hit*: The bay weapon is destroyed.

Subsequent Hits: Count as Structure hits.

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J-Drive - The Jump drive is hit. *First Hit*: All attempts at Jump suffer a –2 DM to Engineering checks. *Second Hit*: The jump drive is disabled. *Third Hit*: The jump drive is destroyed. *Subsequent Hits*: Count as Structure hits.

M-Drive - The maneuver drive is hit. *First Hit*: Reduce the ship's thrust by one. *Second Hit*: Reduce the ship's thrust by 50%. *Third Hit*: The drive is disabled. *Subsequent Hits*: Count as Hull hits.

Power Plant - The power plant is hit. *First Hit*: Damaged.
Second Hit: The crew suffers a Crew Hit, rolling on the Radiation Damage column. *Third Hit*: The Power Plant is destroyed and the ship is disabled.
Subsequent Hits: Count as Structure Hits.

**Sensors -** The sensors are hit. *First Hit:* –2 DM to all Comms checks to use sensors. *Second Hit:* Sensors are disabled preventing the ship from making Comms checks for using sensors and on making attacks on targets beyond Adjacent range. *Third Hit:* Sensors are destroyed. *Subsequent Hits:* Count as Hull hits.

**Bridge** - The bridge is hit. *First Hit:* The crew suffers a Crew Hit, rolling on the Normal Damage column. *Second Hit:* The bridge is disabled. Until the bridge is repaired, the ship cannot take any Pilot or Sensor actions, it cannot jump, and any attacks suffer a –2 DM. *Third Hit:* The bridge is destroyed. **Subsequent Hits**: Count as Structure Hits.

Fuel - The fuel is hit.
First Hit: Causes a minor fuel leak of 1D6 tons per hour.
Second Hit: Destroys 1D6x10% of stored fuel.
Third Hit: Destroys fuel tank.
Subsequent Hits: Count as Structure Hits.

Hold - The cargo hold is hit. *First Hit*: Destroys 1D6x10% of stored cargo. *Second Hit*: Destroys 1D6x10% of stored cargo. *Third Hit*: Destroys cargo hold and everything in it. *Subsequent Hits*: Count as Structure Hits.





**Crew** - Each hit on the crew indicates that radiation or flying debris has injured one or more crew. Roll 2D6 on the appropriate column on the Crew Damage table.

Roll	Normal Damage	Radiation Damage
4 or less	Lucky escape – no damage	Lucky escape – no radiation
5–8	One random crew member suffers 2D6 damage	One random crew member suffers 2D6x10 rads
9–10	One random crew member suffers 4D6 damage	One random crew member suffers 4D6x10 rads
11	All crew suffer 2D6 damage	All crew suffer 2D6x10 rads
12	All crew suffer 4D6 damage	All crew suffer 4D6x10 rads

### **Retreat – Disengaging and Fleeing**

Small ships may actually pound each other to pieces quite quickly, but larger ships may suffer some significant damage that forces them from battle. In this case that ship must roll successfully to make this manoeuvre.

Roll 2D6. The fleeing ship must roll 8+ to successfully disengage.

DM's: -1 if G rating of the drive is lower than the pursuer.

-3 if G rating of the drive is half or less than the pursuer.

+1 if this is the PC's ship, and it has a pilot of skill 3 or more.

Even if successful, the fleeing ship will still be subjected to one more attack.

### Examples of All-In One Space Combat:

### Fighter versus Fighter

Fighters from opposing navy's clash. CRs are both 5. The first fighter checks the Comparison Table and finds the CRs are (obviously) evenly matched. The Player rolls a 7+ to hit. This he does, rolling 7 exactly for a single hit – a Hull hit, lowering the second fighter's Hull points to 0. The second fighter makes an attack, but fails. The first fighter attacks again and again rolls a 7, for a single hit. This is another Hull hit (actually armour, but since the fighter has no armour it defaults to Hull points). With no Hull points to soak up this attack, the pilot suffers a fairly catastrophic 11 points of damage, presumably depressurizing his cockpit and causing other damage too. Battle over.

### System Defence Boat versus Light Cruiser

The SDB has CR of 9 (with 8 Hull and Structure points) and the Light Cruiser has a CR of 12 (with 24 Hull and Structure points). This could prove a protracted battle, should one of the ships not retreat. The SDB begins a surprise attack and requires a roll of 8+. The player rolls an 11, which was three more than was need, which equates to a double hit: the cruiser's armour drops to 4. Although the cruiser's armour has dropped to a level that would require the CR to be recalculated, we do not do that. Keep it fast and simple, just track the damage instead.





The cruiser responds, needing only 6+. The roll is a 7, equating to a Hull hit on the SDB, lowering it to 7. The SDB fails to strike back, and the cruiser attacks again with a 9, a double hit that lowers the SDB's armour to 6. Again the SDB fails to strike back, and the light cruiser rolls 9 again, another double hit, which damages its sensors too badly for it to continue with the fight.

It attempts to retreat and is successful, rolling a 9; although this opens the SDB to one more attack, it is not damaged and flees.





# Campaign: Survey Scouts

Did you know that Antioch was classified as an 'Earth-like' world? You tell Stamford over there. Tell him how Earth-like it is while the medic does her best to cut the jellies out of his eyes. If it has air you can breathe and there's not enough radiation to kill you stone dead, they call it Earth-like. Look around you. This place doesn't look much like home, and by god it knows a hundred new ways to kill you.

These jellies. I think they take the place of insects here on Antioch. You see them everywhere spread over the rotting vegetation, and they eat one another. Some of them trap bigger creatures, and you can see the struggling victim half-absorbed by some day-glo jelly. Of course they love humans. After we'd waded through the Voltaire Waterlands we were scraping jellies off our legs, and picking them out of our crotch. Toes, the medic, swabbed us down with alcohol.

Well they're back again. Bloody jellies. It rained all last night while we bivouacked up here against the overhanging cliff, and Stamford woke us up with his screaming. Two purple jellies had gotten into his tear ducts, and the things fed on him there. When he woke they were the size of coins, and three times as fat. Stamford was blind and he was panicking. He's only quiet now because Toes stuck him with a tranquiliser. Noone told us the jellies could do that. Then again, no-one told us anything about Antioch. We get so little time to prepare for a drop onto a new world, that there's never any time for someone to stand up in front of us and tell us what to look out for, or what might actually be waiting to kill us.

It's always the same. "You will receive your orders on the ground".

There is no greater science fiction theme than the exploration of uncharted space; many novels, movies and TV series have gone down this route. For SOLO gamers space exploration provides an almost perfect solitaire-play set-up: a ship, a crew and a subsector of unknown space to fly around without the need for NPCs, meddling governments or regulations.

Of course this type of campaign poses some particularly tough challenges for the SOLO Player. Imagine a typical table-top RPG where the referee prepares a scenario for the exploration scouts to investigate. He or she designs the planet and adds a number of mysteries that must be uncovered, the players turn up and whilst exploring Planet X, stumble upon the mysteries. They may include a terrifying danger that could kill the crew or strand them forever (Miller's Planet in Interstellar), the secret of how life exists on a hostile world (the Makers in Frank Herbert's Dune), an eerie and abandoned alien outpost (LV-223 in Prometheus), telepathic wildlife (Finisterre in C.J. Cherryh's Rider at the Gate) or some hitherto unknown intelligent alien race (the centaur-like aliens of Charity in Heinlein's Starman Jones).

These types of mysteries, almost built in to the fabric of the planet itself, do not seem to sit well with random generation tables. Yet for a game of exploration to seem more





than just rolling dice to determine planetary diameter, ocean coverage and atmospheric composition, there must be some type of challenge that tests the Player and allows him or her to feel tension and drama. Of course the Survey Scouts campaign still utilises Storylines, Plans and Random Tables, but just like the Naval Officers and Travellers chapters, unique tables and rules are needed to ensure an enjoyable session of exploration.

### CHECKLIST

### PREGAME

- 1. Create suitable characters
- 2. Ensure characters have 3 Life Events
- 3. Create one PC relationship for each character
- 4. Take a blank subsector map and determine the presence of target star systems.
- 5. On one edge of the map create a suitable base system from which to start the exploration, either by Player selection, or random rolls.

### JUMPING FROM WORLD TO WORLD

- 1. Roll on the Starport Encounters table prior to lift-off.
- 2. Roll for on the Starship Encounters table.
- 3. Roll on the Onboard Events table (Scouts). Roll on the PC Reaction table too, how is one of the characters feeling about another, or the event?
- 4. Entering a new system. Decide on the entry point in the target star system either Inner System or Outer System.
- 5. Conduct a quick survey of all planets and stars in the system (i.e. generate the star system, randomly). Roll the UWP of the mainworld. Assign a label 'hellhole', 'garden', etc. to each planet in the system.

To scan a star system. Navigation or Comms. Difficult (-2) 1-6 hours

- 6. You get 3 rolls to discover survey targets. Decide which of the planetary bodies in your part of the star system you would like to assign the rolls to. Split the 3 rolls between different planetary bodies if desired.
- 7. Decide which survey targets to investigate and in what order. Calculate travel time to the first planet. Make a landing (calculate the time to descend from orbit).
- 8. At the landing site, roll for the survey duration. Next, roll for a Survey Problem. Resolve the problem with a skill roll or roleplaying. Amend the duration of the survey if the task was failed.
- 9. Travel to the other two survey sites and conduct surveys there.
- 10. Choices: Stay in the same star system location and scan for more targets, move to another location in system, or jump to the next world on the survey route.
- 11. When the Player is satisfied with his survey results, jump to the next planet on the survey route.

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12. Total all Survey Points earned for the star system just surveyed.



### THE BLANK MAP

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exploration was often about 'filling in the blanks on the map' and the SOLO Survey Scouts campaign is similar. The subsector (the smallest astronomical map size, measuring 8 hexes – or parsecs - wide by 10 hexes high) is unexplored and although no surveys have yet been conducted astronomers have a good idea of what *might* be waiting for them. Consider our own discoveries; from the Earth-bound telescopes of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, scientists have discovered a stunning 3,447 planets orbiting alien stars (as of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017). Most of these planets belong to stars that are far away from Earth. It makes sense, then, that our explorers will have some astronomical data to guide them – we don't want to give them too much, though, otherwise a large amount of prep work will have to be conducted by the Player before he even breaks atmosphere.

Starting with a blank subsector map (one is provided, later) the Player should mark on the presence of any star systems using the randomised system that is found in the Cepheus Engine. There is normally a basic one-half chance that a world (and its attendant stellar system) will be in a hex. Systematically check each hex on the subsector map, throwing 1D6 and marking the hex with a circle if the result is a 4, 5, or 6. This indicates that a world is present; otherwise, leave the hex blank. The Player may elect to alter the normal chances of worlds, making them more frequent or less frequent to correspond to specific regions of the galaxy. A 50% density (no DM) is appropriate for the spiral arms of the galaxy. Apply a -2 DM for low population rifts, a -1 DM for sparse regions of the galaxy and a +1 DM for densely populated regions.

Once each hex has been checked, go back and generate the first three characteristics (Size, Atmosphere and Hydrographics) for each primary world in the system. Use the System Record sheet to log all of the world characteristics. All of the worlds encountered will have a starport type X, 0 Population, 0 Government, 0 Law Level, 0 Tech Level, no bases and no trade codes. The world name (for now) will simply reflect the 4-digit hex code that it is located in. Here is a typically generated world within my blank subsector:

0103 X436000-0 - - G

The 'G' tells us that there is one and probably more than one gas giant planet within that star system. The chance for a gas giant to be present in any one system is 9 or less (rolled on 2D6).

### Survey Points

The entry on the System Record sheet named 'Survey Points' refers to a method of measure the PC's success during their surveys. Each survey target on a world will glean a few survey points. These are totalled for each system, and these totals added to a grand score. A typical planetary might be able to offer the PCs 10 survey points. It all depends on how well the team overcome obstcles and problems on the ground.



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### SYSTEM SURVEY SHEET

SYSTEM	SURVEY POINTS:	

Orbit	Body	Notes:	
0			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			Mark the Boundary
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			OUTER SYSTEM

SURVEY TARGETS	
Planet	Target details & notes



### THE SURVEY SCOUT CAMPAIGN

The clouds were pink and full of rain. Gradually the ground levelled and we began to hear the sound of a distant roar - a waterfall? The orange fractal plants were tall here and we pushed on toward the sound, following the path. It soon became apparent what was making such a noise. As we rounded a bluff, we were confronted by a grassland that swept away northwards, chocolate-hued mountains were painted against the pink horizon.

"That is..." I muttered. "Awesome" finished Toes. "What is? I can't see? What's making the noise?" pleaded Stamford.

Imagine a yellowing grassland where the grass is twelve metres high, the height of eight men. Like rampant bamboo this stuff swayed in the afternoon breeze and brushed against its neighbours creating a hollow musical note, multiplied ten million times to create one thunderous roar of ever-moving stems. The sound reminded me of turbo-fan engines idling while we stood on the tarmac waiting to board a tactical hopper. Naylor said it reminded him of Niagra Falls, but I don't know how he could possible know that.

The lieutenant turned and shouted to us, "Cyclone grass!" Well, I guess he'd had a better class of briefing than the rest of us, after all.

We moved in single-file down the trail that led knife-like through the mutant bamboo. As we moved in deeper, the noise was frightening, chaotic, the constant movement of the stems disorientating. You could feel the all-enveloping thunder in your gut, in your lungs and it swirled around your head. Some of the team were shouting at the tops of their voices as if to try and drown it out, push the noise to the outside of their bodies - expel it, and regain some control of their thoughts. Several times I realised we were meandering, so I started watching the compass like a hawk.

### The Crew

Survey scouts, explorers, are a tough and resourceful bunch. Your setting may have its own scout service or perhaps exploration (as in Star Trek) is handled by the navy. In this campaign we will assume that the setting has a scout service, with individual scouts chosen for their missions based on their skills and their experience, rather than rank. The ship will have a captain, but other crewmen will work as a team, and perhaps share responsibilities or take responsibility for tasks assigned to them. Cepheus Engine uses a randomized character generation system which might create a scout character that does not fit any of the crew positions needed for the starship. In order to finish the character creation process with a suitable scout, then, the Player has to add a couple of steps to the process. Here are some guidelines:



- 1) Select a crew position from those available.
- 2) Begin to create characters by using the Scout career; enlistment is automatic.

- 3) Survival. If a Survival roll is failed, the scout character should immediately leave the service and begin play. He still receives his skills for that term, but dos not receive a mustering out roll for it. See the Survival Mishaps table in the Cepheus Engine core book.
- 4) Skill Selection. Make *every other* randomized skill roll a player selection. This enables the player to help build the character that fits the role he has chosen, but still throws up random skills that he might not otherwise have thought of. Remember to roll for a skill when creating a character, then alternate next time by choosing a skill.
- 5) Mustering Out. There is no mustering out, everyone still works for the Scout service. To create a crewman's available cash, roll 1D6, and multiply by Cr Cr 1000.
- 6) Skill Packages. With such a tight focus on characters, there is no need for a skill package to be shared out amongst characters. However, if the Player wants to go for a truly randomized character generation, then share out the skills from this Survey Scout skill package before play is joined:

**Survey Scout Skill Package:** Pilot 1, Navigation 1, Survival 1, Recon 1, Comms 1, Medicine 1 Gun Combat 1

### The Ship

Space exploration requires a certain type of ship and a couple of scientific craft are featured in the Cepheus core book, the 200-ton Research Vessel and the 300-ton Survey Vessel. However, both are limited to only a jump-1 drive which significantly reduces the number of worlds in a subsector than can be reached. Two more suitable scout ships, perfect for solo play, are presented below the 100-ton Light Scout and the 200-ton Survey Scout. The first carries a four-man crew and the other a seven-man crew (for the adventurous SOLO Player – since seven PCs is a certainly lot to keep track of!). The Player should familiarize himself with the ship's capabilities. The ship requires a name - can the Player think of one?

### The Mission

A Survey Scout game should begin on an outpost planet of the setting's interstellar nation. This world sits on the frontier, facing uninhabited and unexplored space – represented by the blank subsector map. Here at the local starport, their ship is loaded with several months-worth of supplies, ammunition, equipment, water and fuel. In front of the Player will be the specifications of the vessel as well as the blank subsector map which demarcates the survey area. Plot a route from system to system, constrained only the jump number of the survey ship. Aim to be back at the outpost world in 6 months. Of course, the route might change mid-way – that is the prerogative of the ship's captain. Beware that missing that 6 month deadline will probably spark off a search and rescue mission.




My team bedded down on the rock shelf. Each of us in a camo bivvi bag. The stars were out, and they were magnificent, you could even see the Sun. Man, every time that made your stomach turn over on itself; everything you've ever known, every person you've ever met, every place you've ever been, every rock and gust of wind, every fly and every cloud, every event in world history, every rainbow, every grain of sand you ever stepped on .... All of that, all of it in it's entirety, where that little insignificant speck of light is in the night sky. And you're not there.

It only affected some people, and guess I was one of those. Toes had been talking with Sam Joshi, the other female team member, and now she flopped back to look at the stars.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," I ventured.

"What doesn't kill you, will kill you ... tomorrow" she replied, looking at me full in the face and smiling.

#### SALADIN CLASS LIGHT SCOUT SHIP

Using a 100-ton streamlined hull, the Saladin Class light scout is used for fast surveys of newly discovered worlds, its mission to cover lots of ground, rather than linger in-system for months on end. It mounts a jump drive A, a manoeuvre drive A and a powerplant A giving performance of jump 2 and 2G acceleration. It carries 40 tons of fuel allowing for one jump 2 and an endurance of 10 weeks between refuels. A fuel processor is carried. A Model 1/bis computer is fitted adjacent to the bridge, along with a suite of Military rated sensors. One double turret is fitted and it carries beam lasers. The Saladin is fitted with four staterooms. There are 5 probe drones used during surveys and a single air/raft for planetary excursions. There is a 3 ton cargo hold for the storage of supplies, equipment and survey samples.

The crew of the Light Scout is four: captain/pilot, navigator, medic and engineer. All are trained explorers and scientists. Single occupancy for the crew is allowed. The ship costs MCr 27.04 and is built at TL 10.

#### TONGREN CLASS SURVEY SCOUT SHIP

Using a 200-ton streamlined hull, the Tongren Class survey ship explores remote star systems and is designed to carry a small team of survey scouts that can remain away from civilization for long periods of time. It mounts a jump drive C, a manoeuvre drive A and a powerplant C giving performance of jump 3 and 1G acceleration. It carries 60 tons of jump fuel and 12 tons of powerplant fuel allowing for one jump 3 and an endurance of 4 weeks between refuels. A fuel processor is carried. A Model/3 computer is fitted adjacent to the bridge, along with a suite of Advanced Sensors. The Tongren is fitted with four staterooms and two emergency low berths capable of holding up to 8 people in emergency situations. A 4-ton laboratory and a briefing room are also fitted, the briefing room doubling as a crew office. Repair drones are carried for maintenance, and 20 probe drones used during surveys. A 30-ton ship's boat is used for in-system travel and expeditions, whilst two air/rafts are used for travel on a planet's surface. There is a 5 ton cargo hold for the storage of supplies, equipment and survey samples.





The crew of the Tongren is seven: captain, pilot, navigator, sensor operator, science officer, medic and engineer. Double occupancy for the crew is required, although the captain is allocated a single cabin which he also uses as his personal office. The ship costs MCr 94.4 and is built at TL 11.

# **ONBOARD EVENTS – SCOUTS**

D66	Event
11-	Ship Malfunction
16	
21	Data from one of the missions is wiped accidentally.
22	An onboard craft is serviced, and found to be malfunctioning.
23	Captain is incapacitated, roll for a simultaneous event/crisis that needs resolving!
24	An organism has gotten on board and is causing trouble.
25	A strange virus hits the crew. Is there a cure? Where has it come from?
26	Typical trip, with highs and lows.
31	Shipboard Training
32	Crew performance poor
33	Crewman saves another's life
34	Routine maintenance on a large piece of kit requires everyone's help
35	Typical trip, with highs and lows.
36	lliness
41	Mistakes made on duty
42	Shipboard Training
43	Conflicting personalities cause problems
44	Award or decoration due
45	In-ship Competition
46	Crew entertainment evening
51	Shipboard Training
52	Item stolen
53	Cross training course established
54	Holiday or commemoration celebration
55	Injury – someone is to blame
56	Injury
61	Sensors are producing strange readings. Or are they? If so, why?
62	Crewman goes missing on next world
63	Crewman completed some tests/experiments
64	Shipboard romance
65	Rivalry turns into bitter feud
66	Sabotage or wounding, who & why?

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# SURVEYING THE SYSTEM

A scout ship arrives in the target system – but where? The navigator can plot the course of the jump to arrive either in the Inner System of the target star system, in the Outer System. Different types of survey targets will be found in these two different regions of the target star system. What are the PCs looking for? Is it habitable planets? If so then jumping into the Inner System makes most sense. Are they looking for lost alien relics from a once powerful galactic power? Then they may want to vary the regions they target, trying to spread out their search pattern and cover all likely locations.

Select a region of the star system to jump into:

Region	Description
Inner System	This is the hot region close to the main star that extends out to (and includes) the system's habitable zone. Our own Inner System extends from the Sun and encompasses the orbits of Mercury, Venus and Mars. Most mainworlds are located within the Inner System.
Outer System	This is the cold region that sits beyond the habitable zone. Our own Outer System stretches from Mars out to the orbit of Neptune. There may be dwarf planets, asteroid belts and comets, as well as gas giants and their moons. Some gas giants, the Hot Jupiters (or 'epistellar Jovians') orbit within the Inner System. Here we are talking about the cold gas giants thriving out beyond the habitable zone. Such gas giants can be exploited by the survey crew as a fuel stop, involving the skimming of hydrogen fuel from the upper atmosphere in a manoeuvre that takes several hours.

The scout ship has exited jumpspace and is now either in the Inner region of the target system, or the Outer region. Time to man the sensor stations and find out what is out there! Creating a detailed astronomical analysis of the planets, moons and stars within the new system takes time:

To scan a star system. Navigation or Comms. Difficult (-2) 1-6 hours.

Failure simply means the task isn't finished. Try again! Success provides the PCs with a map of the star system and an idea of what kind of bodies occupy each orbit. The Player should use dice to map out the star system for the player characters.

## **Orbits and Planets**

Each system contains a minimum of one star and 2D6+2 planetary bodies. These bodies are located in orbits around the central star, numbered from Orbit 1 (closest to the star). To create a star system, first roll 2D6+2 and determine the number of planetary bodies that orbit the star. Make a note of these bodies, starting at Orbit 1, close to the star.





## **Other Stars**

Many systems have two or even three stars and these additional stars orbit the central star either closely, or at a distance - far beyond the orbit of the planets and gas giants. Roll 2D6; on a 9+ the system is binary, whilst a result of 11 or 12 indicates the existence of a trinary (triple) star system. Where can these companion stars be found? For a binary system, roll 1D6. An 'odds' result indicates that the companion occupies Orbit 1. whilst an 'evens' result indicates that it occupies the orbit beyond the system's furthermost planetary body. For a trinary system the procedure is the same; roll 1D6. An 'odds' result indicates that one of the two companions occupies Orbit 1 and that the other sits out on the edge of the system, in the outermost orbit after the last planetary body. An 'evens' result indicates that both the second and third star both occupy the orbits beyond the system's furthermost planetary body.



## Mainworld

The mainworld is placed next and its location determines the habitable zone of the system. Roll 1D6 and place the mainworld by counting out from the central star (or a companion, if a second star occupies Orbit 1).

## **Gas Giants**

If not done so already (when checking each hex of the Blank Subsector Map), roll 2D6, with a 9 or less indicating the existence of gas giants in the system. The presence of a gas giant allows a starship equipped with fuel scoops to refuel by skimming. Refueling in this fashion requires 1D6 hours per 40 tons of fuel. Gas giants are relatively common.

If gas giants are present then roll 1D6 to determine their number. A roll of 6 must be rerolled, and one of the rerolled gas giants must be placed into Orbit 1, becoming a 'hot Jupiter' that has migrated toward the Inner System. The other gas giants are placed by rolling 1D6 and counting out from the mainworld. An already occupied orbit cancels out the current attempt at gas giant placement, move on to the next one. If the orbit is occupied by the mainworld then roll 1d6; on 5-6 the mainworld orbits the gas giant as a moon. Otherwise place the gas giant one orbit further out.





# **Planetoid Belts**

For each remaining planetary body that has not already been identified as a gas giant (or a star), roll 1D6. On a result of 6 the body is actually a planetoid belt. Do not check for the mainworld, these will be generated in more detail next. Planetoid belts exist in many systems, and will be of value to miners looking for ice, ore and other interesting things. If the primary world of the system is Size 0, then there is at least one planetoid belt in the system automatically and the mainworld is located within it. The Solar System contains a single major planetoid belt – our own Asteroid Belt, between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

# The Rest of the Planets

Any body that remains after determination of companion stars, main world, gas giants and asteroid belts is a minor planet (i.e. not a mainworld). Those within the Inner System (starward of the mainworld) typically have rocky surfaces, whilst those beyond the orbit of the mainworld, in the Outer System, are usually covered by sheets of ice. None of these worlds need be given specific characteristics unless they become important to the current game.

To create the characteristics of any of these minor worlds, use the standard world generation rules in the Cepheus Engine core book. Use the following guidelines:

Creating Minor (not Main) Worlds

*Inner System* – Size 2D6-2, Atmosphere -2, Hydrographics 0 *Outer System* – Size 1D6-2 (with 0 becoming 1), Hydrographics -6

- If Size 0-2 then set Atmosphere 0
- If Size 3-4 and Atmosphere 0-2 set Atmosphere 0
- If Size 3-4 and Atmosphere 3-5 set Atmosphere 1
- If Size 3-4 and Atmosphere 6+ set Atmosphere A

Planets are easily categorized, and this option makes decisions about exploration a little easier:

World Type	Size	Atmosphere	Hydrographics
Rock (Inner Zone)	0-2	0-1	
Hellhole		A-C	
Iceball (Outer Zone)	0-2	0-1	
Desert		2+	0-3
Waterworld			А
Garden		- Everything else	e! -





# **Naming Planets**

There is no onus on the Player to name all of these planets, although he may like to name the mainworld. Instead use a standardized and scientific method of applying labels to the worlds and planets that have been mapped out. All bodies occupying an orbit will be named after the subsector hex they occupy, with a Greek-letter suffix. From Orbit 1 moving out from the central star, use letters of the Greek alphabet to identify the planetary bodies. If the Solar System occupied hex 0207, for example, Mercury would be 207 Alpha, Venus would be 207 Beta, Jupiter becomes 207 Epsilon, etc. Here is an example star system:

		Syst	tem 0509	
Orbit	Body	Notes		
0	Star			
1	Gas Giant	Hot Jupiter		
2	Gas Giant	Hot Jupiter		INNER
3	509 Gamma	X585000-0	[Garden]	SYSTEM
_			L - J	
4	Gas Giant			OUTER
5	509 Epsilon	X100000-0	[lceball]	SYSTEM
				010120
		Gre	ek Letters	
		1	Alpha	
		2	Beta	
		3	Gamma	
		4	Delta	
		5	Epsilon	
		6	Zeta	
		7	Eta	_
		8	Theta	
		9	lota	
		10	Kappa	
		11 12	Lamda Mu	
		13	Nu	
		14	Xi	
		15	Omicron	
		16	Pi	
		17	Rho	-
		18	Sigma	
		19	Tau	
		20	Upsilon	
		21	Phi	
		22	Chi	



Psi

Omega

23

# STUDYING THE MAINWORLD

If the scout ship and the PCs are within the Inner System, the Player can flesh out the mainworld with reference to the following tables and guidelines. Determine the Size, Atmosphere and Hydrographic values of the planet. The guidelines, below, which cover the generation and interpretation of those world characteristics are taken from the Zozer Games' supplement, **The Universal World Profile**:

#### SIZE

The Size characteristic for habitable worlds ranges from 0 to 10, and is determined by rolling 2D6–2.

Digit	World Size	Surface Gravity (gs)
0	800 km (typically an asteroid)	Negligible
1	1,600 km	0.05
2	3,200 km	0.15
3	4,800 km	0.25
4	6,400 km	0.35
5	8,000 km	0.45
6	9,600 km	0.7
7	11,200 km	0.9
8	12,800 km	1.0
9	14,400 km	1.25
10 (A)	16,000 km	1.4

#### Density

Mainworlds are rocky or terrestrial worlds, like Mars, Venus and Earth, but could also be the moon of a gas giant. In general, the larger the world, then the greater its surface gravity will be. Surface gravity figures listed in the Size Table, below, are typical, but could easily vary. The Jovian moon Ganymede, for example, has a density of around a third that of similar-sized Mercury and so it has a much lower surface gravity, 0.146 G compared to Mercury's 0.38 G. It is probably composed of an ice/rock mix. Some rock types like silicate are of a comparatively low density and worlds made up of these lighter rocks would have lower densities and lower gravities compared to similar sized worlds that contain metal-rich rocks. This game doesn't deal with planetary densities, but the Player can look at the Atmosphere value for a clue. On a world with an Earth-like density, Size and Atmosphere should generally match up. On such planets, iron and other metals will be as abundant as they here.

A planet with a low Size but a Standard or Dense Atmosphere probably has a higher than average density, its higher gravity helps it retain the thicker atmosphere. Such a planet is likely to be iron-rich, a miner's dream, with plenty of iron and other useful metals to dig out of the ground. Conversely, a large world that can only cling on to a Thin or Very Thin Atmosphere has a lower than average surface gravity, pointing in turn to a much lower density. These low density worlds are likely to be metal poor perhaps to the point that they are unable to sustain technological and industrial development. Very low density (silicate) planets will exist that bare virtually no useful ores or any kind. Of course large worlds, with more gravitational attraction may attract a moon or two, or more!





#### Volcanism

The density of a mainworld, suggested by both its Size and Atmosphere, holds further clues for the world-builder. High density worlds will have a molten core, suggesting lively tectonic activity which includes earthquakes and volcanoes. It will also be responsible for a powerful magnetic field that diverts solar radiation and can produce spectacular aurorae at the poles. Metal-poor, low density worlds have less interior heat and little tectonic activity, this results in a weak or non-existent magnetic field - and little protection for solar radiation. Where the Atmosphere and Size characteristics are roughly comparable, the Player can, if he desires, assume a more or less Earth-like geology.

Smaller worlds, dead moons and low density planets might still have active cores. Jupiter's moon lo for example, should not have a molten core, but the huge gravitational influence of its parent world as well as neighbouring moons, push and pull lo so much that internal heating occurs. Impressive volcanoes are matched by an equally impressive magnetosphere. A dead world like Mars might have, if the Player chooses, one or more large moons that have a similar dramatic influence.

#### **Rotation, Axial Tilt and Eccentricity**

Unusual worlds can be created simply by varying the speed at which they rotate, the length of their orbit or the tilt of their axis. None of these parameters are suggested by the contents of the UWP, instead the Player has the freedom to apply them when and where they may spice up an otherwise lacklustre planetary description.

So many factors affect planetary rotation that a Player can set the length of a day to anything best fitted to his world design. Humans may prefer a world with days 20 to 30 hours in length, but there are no reasons why a day cannot last six Terran weeks, or six Terran hours. There are some guidelines: larger worlds 'should' generally rotate faster than smaller worlds, older worlds will have had a chance to slow their rotation, planets in the same system will usually all rotate in the same direction, most moons and worlds close to their parent star will have no rotation at all. They are 'tidally locked', with one face permanently facing the more dominant neighbour, just as our own Moon turns one familiar face toward Earth, whilst its far side remains hidden from ground-based observers. Note that M type stars, which are cool and small, may have an Earth-like world within their system, but that it is likely to be so close to the warmth-giving star that it is tidally locked. Be aware also, that a rapid rotation will increase the Coriolis force on the planet's atmosphere, creating strong winds, powerful storms and a dynamic and unpredictable atmospheric weather system.

Axial tilt simply refers to how far a planet leans over while it rotates; all lean to some degree, and this affects how much solar radiation is received away from the equator at certain times during the planet's orbit. These are the seasons. With relatively little or no tilt, there are no seasons. The greater the tilt then the greater the degree of severity of change during the summer and winter months and the longer these extreme seasons will be. Imagine if Earth doubled its tilt to 45 degrees, causing Serengeti-like droughts during the long summer, blizzards and crippling snow-drifts during the similarly long winter. Not only that, but summer days in the far north will



be night-free, whilst those in winter will never see the sun. The more pronounced this tilt, then the further south these 'midnight suns' will occur.

Could a world tip completely over? Could a planet have an axial tilt of 90 degrees? In this scenario, the midnight sun, does not creep up slowly, day by day, but is part and parcel of summer. In summer there is no darkness, in winter there is no daylight. Dawn and dusk are long protracted affairs lasting months. Could a world like this exist? Well yes, Uranus has an axial tilt of 98 degrees and its poles endure 42 years of continuous sunlight followed by 42 years of continuous night. Between the two extremes during the Uranian equinoxes, the gas giant enjoys a short Earth-like day and night cycle.

Just as the Player can 'decide' that a world has an unusual rotation or axial tilt, he also has the option of gracing his world with an eccentric orbit. Orbits are generally circular, but that of Mercury could be described as oval, it speeds up as it nears the Sun, then slows down as it makes its way along the longer part of its uneven orbit. If it was Earth-like, the effect of the seasons would be greatly exaggerated, even a planet with no tilt and no seasons would feel the short heat of summer and the long, cold of winter.

The planet Helliconia, created by writer Brian Aldiss, has a year that is 2500 Terranyears in length and that is extremely eccentric. Civilization itself changes during the course of a year and Aldiss thinks through all of the ramifications of such a monumental seasonal variation, cursing the inhabitants with Fat Death and Bone Fever, diseases that have evolved to remove the weak and to create survivors that will be able to face the coming seasonal cataclysms.

#### Habitation

High density planets are perfect candidates for mining worlds, either as mining outposts if the population is low, or as fully developed industrialized societies built upon a metal rich economy, if the head-count supports it. Worlds with high gravities (typically those of Size 9 and 10, in excess of 1.25 G) would need some adapting to, colonists having spent a century or more there may have selectively bred for survival traits, traits such as short and muscular bodies, and robust cardiac systems to cope with the immense stresses put on the human body. No-one goes anywhere fast which might create a fairly 'tomorrow-will-do' culture, or perhaps it instead fosters a society of careful perfectionists, deliberate and calculating. We can imagine that buildings will be single storey for the most part and that flight will be restricted or non-existent. Water transport will become particularly efficient compared to land or aerial travel, but at any appreciable depth the density of the water will increase dramatically, shutting off the submarine world from surface-world explorers. If there is native life on the high G world in guestion, it will be low-slung, close to the ground and powerfully built. Hal Clement's super-world Mesklin was home to foot-long centipede-like creatures that had developed intelligence and enjoyed the fruits of civilization.

Worlds with a Size of 1-4 generally have low surface gravities; simply walking in a straight line may prove to be a problem. Earth's Moon is a Size 2 body and human movement (as we saw during the Apollo missions) consists of what were described as 'bunny hops'; large strides and long jumps are all possible. Mercury is Size 3 and



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Mars is Size 4. Some worlds will have a Size of 1, equating to a planet the size of one of Saturn's main moons: Rhea, Dione, or Tethys. Movement on a world this small will be particularly challenging. Low G world inhabitants, if they have lived there for several generations, will tend toward the tall and skinny. The construction of tall buildings will be easier than on Earth, and these buildings may look a good deal more outlandish or exotic, since physics and the pull of gravity are so much more forgiving. Flight will often be easier on a low G world (if of course there is an atmosphere to support it!). Contrary to the low-slung native creatures of a high G planet, the local denizens of a low gravity world may include a number of very tall species. Plants and tree analogues may grow to prodigious heights and flying creatures will have an easier time of it. Coupled with a Dense Atmosphere, flying creatures here may grow to some size ... the speculative world titled Blue Moon (which featured in a 2005 TV documentary entitled Alien Worlds) boasted both a low gravity and a dense atmosphere, a combination that was able to support all manner of floating or flying fauna - including the magnificent sky whales.

# **ATMOSPHERE**

A planet's Atmosphere is generated by rolling 2D6–7 and adding the planet's Size. If a world's Size equals 0, then the world's Atmosphere equals 0. The Atmosphere code should never be higher than 15(F).

Digit	Atmosphere	Pressure	Survival Gear Required
0	None	0.00	Vacc Suit
1	Trace	0.001 to 0.09	Vacc Suit
2	Very Thin, Tainted	0.1 to 0.42	Respirator, Filter
3	Very Thin	0.1 to 0.42	Respirator
4	Thin, Tainted	0.43 to 0.7	Filter
5	Thin	0.43 to 0.7	
6	Standard	0.71–1.49	
7	Standard, Tainted	0.71–1.49	Filter
8	Dense	1.5 to 2.49	
9	Dense, Tainted	1.5 to 2.49	Filter
10 (A)	Exotic	Varies	Air Supply
11 (B)	Corrosive	Varies	Vacc Suit
12 (C)	Insidious	Varies	Vacc Suit
13 (D)	Dense, High	2.5+	
14 (E)	Thin, Low	0.5 or less	
15 (F)	Unusual	Varies	Varies

The third digit in the UWP identifies the type of atmosphere that the world has. As a rule, only larger worlds have a gravitational field large enough to hold on to an atmosphere, but there certainly are exceptions. An atmosphere is essentially a layer of gas or gasses that cloak the surface of the planet and there are a number of reasons why a world may or may not be lucky enough to have one. As we have already mentioned, a big world has the muscle to keep its atmosphere and the bigger the world, in all likelihood the denser (or thicker) the atmosphere will be. Conversely, moons and small planets with relatively low surface gravities will generally have only trace atmospheres, if they have anything at all.





Other factors also come into play. A world sitting close to the main star might have its atmosphere stripped away by the destructive energy of the star's solar wind sweeping past. The only chance a planet has of retaining its layer of gasses in this situation, is if it also benefits from a molten core that is producing a protective magnetosphere. Compare the Earth, whose atmosphere is shielded by its magnetosphere, with Mars. The red planet has a trace or very thin atmosphere that was considerably thicker in ancient times, but as the planet cooled it first lost its magnetosphere and then its atmosphere.

Yet there are exceptions; in the depths of the solar system, the moon Titan orbits the ringed planet Saturn. Titan is cold, far from the sun and seismically inactive. It has no magnetosphere and with a surface gravity of only 0.14 G should not be able to retain an atmosphere - yet it has a dense atmosphere that is 1.45 times thicker than that of Earth's! Ganymede and Callisto, comparable-sized moons of Jupiter, are of a similar composition but do not have atmospheres. One theory suggests that Titan, being farther from the sun than the moons of Jupiter, was colder during its formation. Gasses were trapped in the ice at those low temperatures and later made their way into Titan's atmosphere. Pressure

The UWP atmosphere table indicates that there are nine main types of atmosphere: Vacuum, Trace, Very Thin, Thin, Standard, Dense, Exotic, Corrosive and Insidious. This order roughly corresponds to their increasing level of pressure (or thickness). The manner in which the mechanics work attempts to replicate the general rule that small worlds will have thinner atmospheres, whilst larger worlds will boast denser atmospheres. Of course, since it employs random generation, it may throw up an odd-ball like Titan once in a while!

Here on Earth we have little experience of differing atmospheric pressures, and so underestimate how much of an impact this factor may have on everyday life. We are actually living near the bottom of an ocean of air. At sea level, the weight of the air presses down on us with a pressure of 1 kg per squared cm. At higher altitudes, less air means less weight and less pressure. The pressure and density of air decreases with increasing elevation.

Standard pressure is what you are breathing now. The table tells us that Standard has a pressure between 0.71 and 1.49 times that of Earth. Things change at lower pressures and those humans who live or work in mountainous regions can attest to those changes.

At altitudes above 2500m, the air pressure drops to around 0.70 that of sea level. This is equivalent to the Cepheus Engine atmosphere type of Thin. Humans who are not adapted to such conditions can suffer from altitude sickness, with headaches, nausea, extreme tiredness, breathlessness and body pain. Associated high blood pressure can cause complications for pregnant women.

At altitudes above 4000m (such as most of the Tibetan plateau) the oxygen content in every breath full drops almost to 50%, whilst above 7000m (the peaks of the Himalayas) the lack of available oxygen reaches lethal levels. This extreme altitude



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on the 'roof of the world' is equivalent to the atmosphere type of Very Thin. For most explorers, respirators or oxygen masks will be required in this type of environment.

Low pressure atmospheres will have a variety of effects on life, both native and alien. Air temperature will be lower and the atmosphere will retain less heat; it will also have extreme differences in temperature between day and night. The air in a thin atmosphere will be drier than Standard, forcing both humans and native wildlife to drink more water. A further drawback will be the lack of protection the atmosphere provides from the effects of solar radiation. In addition, with fewer air molecules to push against, native animal life will find it difficult to get into the air. There will be few, if any, flying creatures on these worlds. Finally, with less oxygen available, humans will struggle physically, and this struggle will be shared by any combustion-engined vehicles. Railway trains in the Andes struggle to cope with some of the serious inclines on the track because the power isn't there - compressors will need to be fitted to engines in order to supply enough air to keep them running. On mid-tech planets (TL 5 to 8) with thin atmospheres, electrical motors might take the place of more inefficient combustion-engined vehicles and power sources.

Worlds with high pressure atmospheres are likely to be teeming with flying creatures, and while most will be equipped with wings, others might be gas balloons, or may be gliders, or 'kites'. An aerial ecology really thrives when a very small planet (with low gravity) has a dense atmosphere. Dense atmospheres also retain a lot of heat resulting in a great deal of highly energetic weather; imagine gargantuan, continent-spanning hurricanes, powerful electrical storms, supersonic winds and football-sized hailstones! Take a weather phenomenon and max it out!

The greatest benefit of a dense atmosphere is the way in which it shields the surface from the effects of solar radiation (which can make-up for a lack of magnetic field). When considering human habitation on a world with Atmosphere of 8 or 9, remember air resistance - vehicle speeds, including both aircraft and ground cars, will be reduced. Winds will pack far more punch, and building designs will reflect this. Skyscrapers might be quite rare and buildings may only be a couple of stories in height. Vegetation, likewise, will be low-growing, or evolve to counter the prodigious strength of the wind.

#### **Airless Worlds**

A great many randomly created worlds will have an Atmosphere type of 0 (Vacuum) or 1 (Trace). Although a Trace atmosphere denotes a thin veneer of gasses around a world (such as Mercury), it is of such barely measurable pressures that for the purposes of a roleplaying game, it may as well be a vacuum. Animal and plant life is non-existent on an airless world, although exotic and incredibly rare examples of vacuum life might exist (and certainly be worthy of a mission). Humans must resort to living in bubble cities, underground settlements and other artificial, sealed environments. It can be difficult for the Player to make these vacuum habitats stand out from one another. Try to place these settlements at interesting geographical locations: at the entrance to a huge mine, straddling a small meteorite crater, along the walls of a canyon, inside old lava tubes, in the caldera of an extinct volcano, inside a network of vast, natural caves ... and so on. Airlocks become crucial to gameplay, since they limit freedom, so plan for plenty of airlocks - old, new,



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dangerously under-maintained, guarded and unguarded, vehicle locks, elevators to the surface and vast airlocks capable of accepting starships.

#### It's Tainted

The qualifier 'tainted' simply means that the atmosphere in question contains some element that makes it unbreathable. Most likely it is a harmful gas, such as carbon dioxide, methane and/or hydrogen that humans simply cannot breathe, which has serious side effects (such as nitrogen at relatively high partial pressures) or sulphur compounds, possibly resulting from global volcanic activity. Taints may also include bio-hazards such as pollens or alien pheromones. Taints require a filter mask for human survival.

#### **Extreme Atmospheres**

Some of the more difficult atmosphere types to explain and describe are the 'extremes', types A, B and C which equate to Exotic, Corrosive and Insidious. Whereas the Very Thin, Thin, Standard and Dense atmospheres are generally Earthlike in pressures with Earth-like gasses in a variety of amounts, the 'extremes' are terribly toxic, horribly lethal and utterly alien. The three types are really grades of lethality, and an A type and C type atmosphere may actually contain the same poisonous gas, just in different amounts. According to the table, Exotic atmosphere requires an air supply, a Corrosive atmosphere is dangerous, requires a vacc suit and will cause 1d6 damage to an unprotected character per round. An Insidious atmosphere is so dangerous that it will defeat a vacc suit after 2d6 hours and kill the man inside it. Venus, with its incredible high pressure, high temperature atmosphere comes into this latter category. Gasses which give an atmosphere an extreme label include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen, sulphur, oxygen, hydrogen, ammonia, chlorine and fluorine. Select one active element from the list below, but note that some gasses are often found in combination with others on the list. If the Player so decides, use these combinations, mixing together the dangerous effects in one nasty airborne cocktail!

**Carbon Dioxide** - Carbon dioxide made up Earth's early atmosphere, and life on such a world (if it supports life at all) must utilize direct sunlight, geothermal heat or chemical reactions for survival, rather than oxygen. At a high pressure and high temperature, this type of carbon dioxide atmosphere is Insidious, so an Exotic world with a CO2 atmosphere must be distant from its star and the pressure fairly low. [May be found in combination with sulphur dioxide, fluorine, nitrogen or chlorine]

**Methane** - Methane is both odourless and colourless and is extremely explosive should anyone bring oxygen with them down to the world's surface. Leaks from vacc suits or habitats or malfunctioning airlocks could easily mix oxygen with methane and create the potential for a fierce explosion and fire. Methane worlds are usually large and cool and will tend to form very dense atmospheres. Titan is a good example of a world boasting an Exotic atmosphere, although in Titan's case it is so far from the sun that a heat-suit is needed as well as an oxygen supply. [May be found with ammonia, or in a methane-ammonia-hydrogen mix]

*Nitrogen* - An atmosphere containing nitrogen and oxygen in certain combinations will contain a nitric acid irritant, which on Exotic worlds will require a protective suit, and which on type B and C worlds is the cause of corrosive effects. On these latter



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worlds, there may be rivers and seas of nitric acid, all fed by an acid rain that can kill. [May be found with fluorine]

**Oxygen** - Believe it or not, high concentrations of oxygen can be extremely harmful to humans. A planet with a high oxygen content could be either Exotic or Corrosive. At standard pressures, high oxygen levels burn the eyes and throat and fluid forms in the lungs, the explorer becomes breathless and feels pains in his chest; of course there are also the associated dangers of explosion and intense fire which accompany large concentrations of this gas. As a side-note, oxygen 'can' be breathed at levels up to 100% safely, as it was by astronauts in the Mercury and Gemini programmes, but only at reduced pressures.

**Hydrogen** - A cold world in the outer zone, with an atmosphere made up predominately of hydrogen will qualify as Insidious. Hydrogen is not poisonous, but it is extremely flammable and its atoms are small enough to penetrate suits, seals and vehicles. Hydrogen, with its associated effects, will be found within ammonia and also methane-rich atmospheres. [May be found in a methane-ammonia-hydrogen mix]

*Sulphur* - Sulphur compounds created by volcanic activity or as a result of run-away industrialization, act as an irritant and in much greater concentrations becomes corrosive. Life might evolve to utilise sulphur rather than carbon, but its low energy yield might limit the organisms' size. [May be found with carbon dioxide, fluorine or chlorine]

**Ammonia** - Ammonia is another irritant that, if present in low amounts on an Exotic world, would require a protective suit as well. Any leaks will be noticed immediately due to ammonia's pungent odour, which any Player who owned a child's chemistry set will vividly remember. Ammonia attacks the eyes, throat and mucus membranes with a fierce chemical burn that will be blinding and choking (and fatal rather quickly) on Corrosive or Insidious worlds. Ammonia planets will probably be large and cold with dense atmospheres. [May be found with methane or as a methane-ammonia-hydrogen mix]

**Chlorine** - Chlorine's use as a chemical weapon during the First World War reflects the chemical's toxic nature. It might be present in tiny amounts on an Exotic world - enough to cause persistent irritation, but in any sizable amount will be deadly, and in such concentrations be found on Corrosive and Insidious worlds. The gas has a strong odour and is greenish-yellow in colour, making leaks easy to identify. Chlorine will damage and destroy exposed tissue faster and more effectively than ammonia, and like ammonia blinds and chokes. It is an extremely dangerous substance even in fairly low concentrations. Since chlorine reacts in a similar fashion to that of oxygen, chlorine-based life might well exist on some worlds. And since chlorine is visible, an atmosphere with the gas in its make-up will appear green, sunlight creating a yellow-green haze through which the landscape can be viewed. [May be found with nitrogen, carbon dioxide or disulphur dichloride]

*Fluorine* - More corrosive, more toxic and more dangerous than chlorine, this gas will only form the atmosphere of a Corrosive or Insidious world. Like chlorine,





atmospheres of this type may support bizarre alien eco-systems. [May be found with nitrogen, carbon dioxide or sulphur tetrachloride]

*High Temperature* - Although not a toxic gas, air temperature on a world with a carbon dioxide, chlorine, nitrogen or Earth-like oxygen atmosphere might be so high as to qualify the world as Corrosive or Insidious. Venus is a prime example with its carbon dioxide atmosphere squeezed to 92 Earth atmospheric pressure and cooked at 460 degrees Celsius.

#### Temperature & Climate

A world within the habitable zone may be temperate and Earth-like, but could just as easily be in deep freeze or a burnt and cracked desert planet. Many factors play a part in the determination of surface temperature and so it is an aspect of world building best left to choice as part of the creation procedure. If randomness is required, however, then use the following Temperature Table:

2D6	Temperature Type	Temperature °Celsius
	Frozen	-50°C or less
2-4	Cold	-50°C to 0°C
5-9	Temperate	0°C to 30°C
10-12	Hot	30°C to 80°C
	Roasting	80°C or more

## **HYDROGRAPHICS**

Hydrographic percentage is obtained by rolling 2D6–7 and adding the world's Size, modified by the world's atmosphere or size as described in the Hydrographic DMs below:

Condition	DM
Size 0 or 1	Hydrographics must be 0
Atmosphere 0, 1, A, B or C	-4
Atmosphere E	-2

A world's Hydrographics value should never exceed 10 (A).

Digit	Hydrographic Percentage	Description
0	0%-5%	Desert world
1	6%–15%	Dry world
2	16%–25%	A few small seas.
3	26%–35%	Small seas and oceans.
4	36%–45%	Wet world
5	46%–55%	Large oceans
6	56%–65%	Large oceans
7	66%–75%	Earth-like world
8	76%–85%	Water world
9	86%–95%	Only a few small islands and archipelagos.
10 (A)	96–100%	Almost entirely water.





The Hydrographic characteristic indicates how much of the world's surface is covered with ocean. Each point represents around 10%. As an example, Earth is covered by approximately 70% seas and oceans, giving it a Hydrographic value of 7. Remember that this is an approximation; a planet with 100% ocean coverage might by a Kevin Costner-style water world, or it might be home to hundreds of tiny coral atolls. Be flexible in the description. On most worlds, this value will represent the percentage of 'water' on the surface, but on a planet with an extreme atmosphere the liquid will instead play some part in the chemistry of the world (nitric acid oceans on a world with a nitrogen-rich atmosphere, for example).

Oceans tend to be salty, due to the geological salts leaching out of the bed-rock. The presence of moons will make them tidal. Other bodies, too, can cause tidal effects. If the world is the moon of a gas giant inside the habitable zone, the gravitational interaction between the gas giant and other moons will create very significant tides. Slow-paced tides (measured over months or years) might be caused by the presence of a binary star within the system.

A tectonically active planet will have a complex underwater geography of mid-ocean ridges, abyssal plains and deep-ocean trenches. More benign worlds will have shallow seas with a fairly unremarkable subsea topography, eons of erosion levelling off any submarine mountain chains.

#### Dry Worlds (Hydrographics 0-3)

The desert planet is a staple of science fiction, from Tatooine and Arrakis, to Heinlein's Klendathu and Forbidden Planet's Altair IV. The true desert world, with a Hydrographics value of 0 (absolutely no surface water at all) is sometimes thrown up by the world generation system. Worlds like Dune, with its gargantuan sand worms and Bruce Sterling's Nullaqua provide us with vivid living and breathing examples; they illustrate just what you can do with a desolate ball of rock lacking water and plant life. Dune's ecology and physical geography are lovingly detailed, realistic and evocative. Meanwhile Nullaqua pushes the concept of a desert one step further, human activity is concentrated in vast dust-filled crater. So fine is the dust that it can be traversed on ships and is home to the enigmatic 'dust whales'.

However, far more common are the 'dry worlds' with hydrographic levels of 30% or below. With little or no rainfall there is a lack of surface water; plant and animal life will struggle to survive and there will be limited opportunities for colonisation and human settlement. You can imagine great seas of sand, an ocean of dunes that spans the globe of one of these dry worlds. However, the creation of worlds for a game universe should be a little more sophisticated than that. Your planet might be a dry desert world, but its surface is not going to consist solely of sand dunes. Consider Mars, our nearest desert-like world ... there are dune fields close to the poles, certainly, but the rest of the Martian surface is wonderfully diverse, complex and varied. The harshest, driest deserts on Earth are similarly varied.

Hamada is an Arabic term for a bare plain of bedrock, strewn with pebbles, gravel and boulders, while another term, 'reg' is a sandy plain strewn with larger boulders and rocks. Yet another Arabic word, 'erg' describes the familiar sand sea complete with wind-blown dunes. These three types of desert surface would pose very different problems for characters. And then there are salt pans, mountains, mesas,





water-cut arroyos (or wadis) and playas, which are the gravel plains at the openings of canyons which are created by extremely short-lived desert rivers. Wind and water can likewise sculpt the rock on a regional scale to create a landscape of sandblasted pillars, pinnacles and arches similar to those of America's Painted Desert. Or, if the winds are consistent and continuous, an unearthly terrain of long, aerodynamic rock ridges called 'yardangs'.

Most dry worlds will have a small sea or scattered lakes, perhaps a few small rivers and perhaps even a large Nile-like analogue. Around these water sources vegetation will thrive, and there may be forests or intensively-irrigated agricultural areas. The boundary between waterless desert and fairly lush, habitable regions will be composed of semi-arid lands, steppe or savannah, a place where water is scare but available in large enough amounts (perhaps seasonally) that plants and animals tough enough to live there can eke out an existence.

#### Wet Worlds (Hydrographics 4-9)

When the term 'Earth-like planet' is bandied about, it generally refers to a world with a sufficient level of surface water to support a complex eco-system of plants and animals. Yes, there may be arid deserts and frozen wastes, but with seas and oceans in great quantity and assuming an atmosphere conducive to life, the world's surface will be a riot of climatic zones and vegetation types. With good reason, these lush, fertile planets are more commonly known as 'Garden worlds'. In a roleplaying context, it can sometimes be difficult to make these Earth-like locations distinctive or 'un-Earthly' and you may well fall into the trap-of-least resistance, that is, assuming that the world in question is just 'Earthlike' without any further elaboration.

#### Waterworlds (Hydrographics A)

A waterworld, a planet with a single ocean and no dry land, may seem unlikely but it has many precedents in science fiction - from George Lucas' Kamino, to 2181 Despoina in Mass Effect 3, and Goodloe and Oltion's Theresa, which was once an iceworld like Ganymede, but that had later been melted during the slow expansion of its red giant star. In 2012, scientists confirmed that the exoplanet GJ1214b has a thick water vapour atmosphere which suggests that it is a waterworld (although one very different to those featuring in movies and sci-fi literature).

Players creating a waterworld might easily fall into the same 'all desert worlds are sandy' trap. How can such a bland, watery world offer anything to the players or the game? The 100% hydrographic value may not mean there is no dry land, in fact there may well be volcanic island chains, coral reefs, vast tidal sandbanks and so on, and it is on these remote pieces of dry land that starships will land and where the native population will live. Life might easily get crowded, intolerably so, on a waterworld with a million people. Or will it? With sufficient technology humans may decide to move under the waves to create cities beneath the sea, something posited by visionaries and underwater pioneers in the 1960s and 70s. Relying on undersea mining and aquaculture, hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions of people might inhabit the ocean floor in domes and sealed habitats.

This brings a new set of considerations to the table, and these considerations address the physical problems of living underwater. Problems of pressure, temperature, light and remoteness are as important here as they are in orbit around





some distant star. Building up a picture of life on the ocean bed could prove difficult. The Player who is unfamiliar with the science of deep water environments might find it helpful to imagine the ocean floor of his waterworld as the surface of an airless moon. There will be colonies or habitats, sealed against the pressure and cold, perhaps built as a series of connected domes or tubes, complete with airlocks. Submarine settlements like this will be located in the relatively shallow waters around continents or large islands, rather than the crushing depths out in the deep ocean. Submarines take the place of aircraft or spaceships, moving people, goods and raw materials between habitats, while self-contained diving suits take the place of vacc suits. There will be mines and aquaculture farms. And not everyone will get along. The Government characteristic will give the Player a very good idea of what is going on - how are these submariners organising themselves? Some of the technical aspects of working on the seabed for extended durations are nicely illustrated in two sci-fi movies: The Abyss and The Sphere.

# LOCATING SURVEY TARGETS

The trees here were those twisted tubers, half-a-dozen stems wrapping themselves around a pulpy mass to stretch up into the sky with leaves that were huge broad 'lilypads'. As our shadows shortened, the trees began to crack and groan, the tubers twisting and expanding in the heat. The whole forest snapped and moaned while we moved on, and at nightfall first squad scouted out a canyon ahead of us that seemed to be overgrown with vegetation resembling purple foam.

So the ship has scanned the star system and the crew have come up with a general 'map' or orbit list of what is out there. What now? Human exploration means getting up close to interesting phenomenon - measuring, imaging, recording and analysing. To do that the crew must identify a number of prospective survey targets. Once these targets have been acquired, the PCs can discuss amongst themselves which one they would most like to explore.

#### **Roll Three Times**

The Player can roll **three times** and on any of the target tables suitable for that region of the star system. He or she can only select a table if that particular type of planetary body exists in the region of the star system that the Player's ship is currently in. There may be many more sites of interest, but these are the ones that the crew have prioritized and look to be the most attractive. Creating this list of survey targets takes time (2D6 hours). Should the Player not fancy any of the targets that were rolled, then the PCs manning the sensor stations can be directed to make further analyses and create another short list of three targets. Each time this occurs, however, the time it takes to conduct the search gets longer and longer.

Initial Search	2D6 hours
Second Search	1-3 days
• Third (and subsequent) Searches	7 days



The aim of these searches of course, is not to document from orbit and then fly away, it is to find a target site that the crew can visit in person, suited up, carrying all the equipment they need and ready to get their hands dirty! Resist the temptation to keep on rolling, disregarding results you do not like, or have the crew conduct yet another search. You might be hankering to study a rainforest or intelligent alien life or find some ancient alien city in ruins (and those targets do appear on the tables!) but to keep rolling until you get the target you desire makes the tables meaningless. Let us assume that the player characters know what they are doing and understand the importance of the targets they have located. Let's humour them, and conduct the ground survey! We are here to get into sticky situations and find clever ways of getting out of them, landing on water sounds cool to me, and the trip to the polar region means we get to crack open the arctic survival clothing!

**Example:** The scoutship Endurance has emerged from jumpspace into the Inner region of the 0509 star system (see earlier). After a full scan of the system has been conducted the Player must decide what his targets are going to be. His options are limited, there aren't many planets in the 509 system. He can choose from the two Hot Jupiters and a Garden world currently known as 509 Gamma. Since Garden worlds have a lot of potential targets and the chance of life, he decides to roll twice on the Garden World Target table and once on the Hot Jupiter Target table (for Hot Jupiter 509 Beta). The search took 8 hours, and threw up two interesting target sites on the mainworld: an area of brightly coloured red ice near the north pole, and an ocean region of extremely fast moving tidal currents. Hot Jupiter 509 Beta throws up another target: a dust ring.

Region	Suitable Target Tables
Inner System	<ul> <li>Desert World</li> <li>Hellhole World</li> <li>Garden World</li> <li>Rocky Planet</li> <li>Water World</li> <li>Hot Jupiter</li> <li>Planetoid Belt</li> </ul>
Outer System	<ul> <li>Desert World</li> <li>Hellhole World</li> <li>Iceball World</li> <li>Rocky Planet</li> <li>Gas Giant</li> <li>Planetoid Belt</li> </ul>



Other than gas giants and planetoid/asteroid belts, any world in a star system can be quickly categorised as one of the six types below. These categories only roughly correspond with the Trade Classifications provided in the Cepheus Engine core book. Their purpose is to provide tailored survey targets based on the environment and terrain that each type of world has to offer.

World Type	Size	Atmosphere	Hydrographics
Rock (Inner Zone)	0-2	0-1	
Hellhole		A-C	
Iceball (Outer Zone)	0-2	0-1	
Desert		2+	0-3
Waterworld			А
Garden		<ul> <li>Everything els</li> </ul>	se! -

#### Interplanetary Travel

The PCs will want to – will need to – travel around the star system. Firstly, they will want to visit these target worlds. If the targets they have are poor, then the PCs may want to travel to the Inner System (or the Outer, if they are already within the Inner System). How long do these transits take, given that we don't know the distances of the orbits from the star, and even if we did, we have no way of knowing in which part of its orbit a planet is at the present time. The answer (of course) is to randomise.

Travel Distance to a Planet								
In the Inner System	In the Outer System							
1.6 million km	255 million km							
5 million km	255 million km							
20 million km	600 million km							
45 million km	600 million km							
100 million km	900 million km							
255 million km	1000 million km							
	In the Inner System 1.6 million km 5 million km 20 million km 45 million km 100 million km							

Travel from Inner to Outer or vice-versa 600 million km

The actual travel times vary depending on the drive rating of the PCs' ship; see the Common Travel Times by Acceleration table, but note these only take you into orbit. To make a landing see the section entitled **Getting to the Surface and Back** (later).

Ships making short interplanetary flights usually accelerate halfway there, then reverse thrust and decelerate the rest of the way. The Common Travel Times by Acceleration table offers rounded values for common travel times. For Players desiring more accuracy in their numbers, use the formula:



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where  ${\bf T}$  is time in seconds,  ${\bf D}$  is distance in meters, and  ${\bf A}$  is

**T=2**  $\sqrt{\frac{D}{A}}$  what concentration in m/sec<sup>2</sup>

Common Travel Times by Acceleration								
Distance (km)	1-G	2-G	3-G	4-G	5-G	6-G	Example	
1,000	10m, 32s	7m, 27s	6m, 5s	5m, 16s	4m, 43s	4m, 18s	Jump pt., planetoid	
10,000	33m, 20s	23m, 34s	19m, 15s	16m, 40s	14m, 54s	13m, 36s	Typical surface to orbit	
100,000	1h, 45m	1h, 15m	1h, 1m	52m, 42s	47m, 8s	43m, 2s		
160,000	2h, 13m	1h, 34m	1h, 17m	1h, 7m	59m, 38s	54m, 26s	Jump pt., UWP size 1	
320,000	3h, 9m	2h, 13m	1h, 49m	1h, 34m	1h, 24m	1h, 17m	Jump pt., UWP size 2	
480,000	3h, 51m	2h, 43m	2h, 13m	1h, 55m	1h, 43m	1h, 34m	Jump pt., UWP size 3	
640,000	4h, 27m	3h, 9m	2h, 34m	2h, 13m	1h, 59m	1h, 49m	Jump pt., UWP size 4	
800,000	4h, 58m	3h, 31m	2h, 52m	2h, 29m	2h, 13m	2h, 2m	Jump pt., UWP size 5	
960,000	5h, 27m	3h, 51m	3h, 9m	2h, 43m	2h, 26m	2h, 13m	Jump pt., UWP size 6	
1,000,000	5h, 33m	3h, 56m	3h, 12m	2h, 47m	2h, 29m	2h, 16m		
1,120,000	5h, 53m	4h, 9m	3h, 24m	2h, 56m	2h, 38m	2h, 24m	Jump pt., UWP size 7	
1,280,000	6h, 17m	4h, 27m	3h, 38m	3h, 9m	2h, 49m	2h, 34m	Jump pt., UWP size 8	
1,440,000	6h, 40m	4h, 43m	3h, 51m	3h, 20m	2h, 59m	2h, 43m	Jump pt., UWP size 9	
1,600,000	7h, 2m	4h, 58m	4h, 3m	3h, 31m	3h, 9m	2h, 52m	Jump pt., UWP size A	
5,000,000	12h, 25m	8h, 47m	7h, 10m	6h, 13m	5h, 33m	5h, 4m	Jump pt., small gg	
10,000,000	17h, 34m	12h, 25m	10h, 9m	8h, 47m	7h, 51m	7h, 10m	Jump pt., large gg	
45,000,000	1d, 13h	1d, 2h	21h, 31m	18h, 38m	16h, 40m	15h, 13m	Close neighbor	
100,000,000	2d, 8h	1d, 15h	1d, 8h	1d, 4h	1d, 1h	22h, 41m		
255,000,000	3d, 17h	2d, 15h	2d, 3h	1d, 20h	1d, 16h	1d, 12h	Far neighbor	
600,000,000	5d, 16h	4d, 0h	3d, 7h	2d, 20h	2d, 13h	2d, 8h	Close gas giant	
900,000,000	6d, 23h	4d, 22h	4d, 0h	3d, 11h	3d, 3h	2d, 20h	Far gas giant	
1,000,000,000	7d, 8h	5d, 4h	4d, 5h	3d, 16h	3d, 7h	3d, 0h		



D66	Garden World Targets
11-	Intelligent Alien Life: see sub-table
12	
13	Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
14	Ice. 1D6: 1-2 Ice Fissure; 3-4 Ice Discolouration; 5-6 Ice Formation or Structure.
15	Canyon. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long.
16	Sinkholes. 1D6: 1-2 Lead to cave systems; 3-4 Extinct Lava tubes; 5-6 Seasonal.
21	Island Chain. 1D6: 1-2 Volcanic; 3-4 Coral Reefs; 5-6 Drowned Landscape.
22	Linear Features. 1D6: 1-2 Fault line; 3-4 Volcanic rock formation; 5-6 Vegetation.
23	Ocean currents. 1D6: 1-2 Hot spots like El Niño; 3-4 Fast moving; 5-6 Water discolouration.
24	Moon. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape.
25	Volcano: 1D6: 1-2 In mountain chain; 3-4 Solitary; 5-6 Seabed.
26	Fumaroles (Thermal Vents): 1D6: 1-2 Steam vents; 3-4 Lava landscape; 5-6 Poison gas vents.
31	<b>Dust Storm</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Extensive, almost global; 3-4 High, almost to space; 5-6 Very abrasive.
32	Impact Crater: 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Rich mineral content; 5-6 Recent.
33	Lake: 1D6: 1-2 Shape or location odd; 3-4 Ancient dry lakebed; 5-6 Mineral or gas content.
34	Coastal Formations: 1D6: 1-2 Arches and stacks; 3-4 Raised beaches; 5-6 Very High cliffs .
35	<b>Tectonic Plate Boundary</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Rift valley on land; 3-4 Ocean trench; 5-6 Mid-ocean ridge.
36	Waterfall: 1D6: 1-2 Entire chain or series; 3-4 Very high; 5-6 Very wide.
41	River: 1D6: 1-2 Very long; 3-4 Huge delta; 5-6 Eroded deep canyon
42	<b>Weather</b> : 1D6: 1 High rainfall; 2 High winds; 3 Acid rain; 4 Jungle humidity; 5 Mountain cloud effects; 6 Hurricane.
43	<b>Tides</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Fast moving; 3-4 Tide is very high; 5-6 Uncovers strange rock formations.
44	Wind Erosion: 1D6: 1-2 Long yardangs; 3-4 Inselberg plain; 5-6 Fairy chimneys.
45-	Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table
51	
52-	Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
54	
55-	Animal Life (Fauna): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Microfauna (microscopic); 4-5
62	Megafauna (large animals); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours
63-	Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Plants in extreme environments; 4

66 Carnivorous plants; 5-6 Large tree-type plants

Often the type of terrain or climatic environment around a survey target is self explanatory (tides, moon, ice, wind erosion, etc.) Where the surrounding environment is more ambiguous, then select a terrain type from the table below, or roll 2D6. The target, for example, might be an impact crater. But where on the Garden World is this impact crater? We roll the dice: 11 – that is cool grassland, or steppe. How about coastal formations, what is the landscape like? We roll the dice: 4 – that is temperate forest. This adds detail that will affect the equipment needed as well as some of the challenges that must be overcome.

#### 2D6 Garden World Terrain Types

- 2 Polar ice cap
- 3 Tundra
- 4 Forest Temperate or Cold
- 5 Scrubland
- 6 Mountain
- 7 Desert
- 8 Warm Grassland (Savannah)
- 9 Humid Rainforest
- 10 Dry (Warm Temperate)
- 11 Cool Grassland (Steppe)
- 12 Swamp

#### D66 Desert World Targets

11- 12	Intelligent Alien Life: see sub-table
13	Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
14	Volcano: 1D6: 1-2 In mountain chain; 3-4 Solitary; 5-6 Seabed.
15	Weather: 1D6: 1-2 Dust devils; 3-4 High winds; 5 Fog Banks; 6 Hurricane.
16	Sinkholes. 1D6: 1-2 Lead to cave systems; 3-4 Extinct Lava tubes; 5-6 Seasonal.
21	Dry Lake or Sea: 1D6: 1-2 Shape or location odd; 3-4 Soft or liquid beneath; 5-6 Patterned.
22	Linear Features. 1D6: 1-2 Fault line; 3-4 Volcanic rock formation; 5-6 Vegetation.
23	<b>Tectonic Plate Boundary</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Rift valley on land; 3-4 Ocean trench; 5-6 Mid-ocean ridge.
24	Moon. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape.
25	Impact Crater: 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Rich mineral content; 5-6 Recent.
26- 31	<b>Fumaroles (Thermal Vents)</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Steam vents; 3-4 Lava landscape; 5-6 Poison gas vents.
32- 33	<b>Dust Storm</b> : 1D6: 1-2 Extensive, almost global; 3-4 High, almost to space; 5-6 Very abrasive.
34	Sand Dunes: 1D6: 1-3 Very high; 4-6 Unusual shapes and formations.
35	Depression: 1D6: 1-2 Quicksands; 3-4 Salt marsh; 5 Salt Pans, 6 Oases.
36- 41	Canyon. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long.
42- 43	Dry River Bed: 1D6: 1-2 Very long; 3-4 Alluvial fan; 5-6 Eroded deep canyon
44- 45	Wind Erosion: 1D6: 1-2 Long yardangs; 3-4 Inselberg plain; 5-6 Fairy chimneys.
46- 51	Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table
52- 54	Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
55- 62	<b>Animal Life (Fauna):</b> 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Microfauna (microscopic); 4-5 Megafauna (large animals); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours

- 63- Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1 Interesting ecosystem; 2-4 Plants in extreme environments; 5
- 66 carnivorous plants; 6 Tree-type plants.

#### 3D6 Rocky Planet Targets

- 3 Intelligent Alien Life: see sub-table
- 4 Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
- 5 Volcano: 1D6: 1-2 In mountain chain; 3-4 Solitary; 5-6 Seabed.
- 6 Linear Features. 1D6: 1-2 Fault line; 3-4 Volcanic rock formation; 5-6 Unusually long ridge
- 7 **Moon**. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape.
- 8 **Sinkholes**. 1D6: 1-4 Lead to cave systems; 5-6 Seasonal.
- 9 **Rille or Canyon**. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long.
- 10-11 Impact Crater: 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Rich mineral content; 5-6 Recent.
- 12-13 Lava Plain: 1D6: 1-2 Recent Lava Flows; 3-4 Lava channels; 5-6 Very High cliffs .
- 14 **Dust**: 1D6: 1-2 Fine and deep; 3-4 Oddly dark/light in colour; 5-6 Partially covered another feature (roll again).
- 15 Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table
- 16 Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
- 17 Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3-6 Plants in extreme environments.
- 18 **Animal Life (Fauna):** 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3-5 Microfauna (microscopic); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours

#### 11-Intelligent Alien Life: see sub-table 12 Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition 13 14 Canyon. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long. 15 Sand Dunes: 1D6: 1-3 Very high; 4-6 Unusual shapes and formations. Sinkholes. 1D6: 1-2 Lead to cave systems; 3-4 Extinct Lava tubes; 5-6 Seasonal. 16-21 22 Dry Lake or Sea: 1D6: 1-2 Shape or location odd; 3-4 Soft or liquid beneath; 5-6 Patterned.

23 Linear Features. 1D6: 1-2 Fault line; 3-4 Volcanic rock formation; 5-6 Vegetation.

- 24
- Moon. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape.
- 25 Volcano: 1D6: 1-2 In mountain chain; 3-4 Solitary; 5-6 Seabed.
- 26 Fumaroles (Thermal Vents): 1D6: 1-2 Steam vents; 3-4 Lava landscape; 5-6 Poison gas vents.
- Dust Storm: 1D6: 1-2 Extensive, almost global; 3-4 High, almost to space; 5-6 Very abrasive. 31
- 32 Impact Crater: 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Rich mineral content; 5-6 Recent.
- 33 Lake: 1D6: 1-2 Shape or location odd; 3-4 Seasonal; 5-6 Mineral or gas content.
- 34 Coastal Formations: 1D6: 1-2 Arches and stacks; 3-4 Raised beaches; 5-6 Very High cliffs .
- Tectonic Plate Boundary: 1D6: 1-2 Rift valley on land; 3-4 Ocean trench; 5-6 Mid-ocean ridge. 35
- 36 Waterfall: 1D6: 1-2 Entire chain or series; 3-4 Very high; 5-6 Very wide.
- 41 River: 1D6: 1-2 Very long; 3-4 Huge delta; 5-6 Eroded deep canyon
- 42-Weather: 1D6: 1 Daily mist-effects; 2 High winds; 3-4 Acid rain; 5 Mountain cloud effects; 6 44 Hurricane.
- 45 Tides: 1D6: 1-2 Fast moving; 3-4 Tide is very high; 5-6 Uncovers strange rock formations.
- 46-Wind Erosion: 1D6: 1-2 Long yardangs; 3-4 Inselberg plain; 5-6 Fairy chimneys.
- 52

D66

53-Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table

**Hellhole World Targets** 

- 55
- 56-Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
- 62
- 63-Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Plants in extreme environments; 4
- 64 carnivorous plants; 5-6 Large tree-type plants
- 65-Animal Life (Fauna): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3-4 Microfauna (microscopic); 5
- 66 Megafauna (large animals); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours

#### 3D6 **Iceball World Targets**

- Intelligent Alien Life: see sub-table 3
- 4 Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
- Subsurface ocean. 1D6: 1-2 Thin ice above; 3-6 Fissures in ice lead to subsurface ocean. 5
- 6 **Linear Features**. 1D6: 1-2 Fault line; 3-4 Volcanic rock formation; 5-6 Unusually long ice ridge
- Moon. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape. 7
- Sinkholes. 1D6: 1-4 Lead to cave systems; 5-6 Seasonal. 8
- 9 Cryovolcano: 1D6: 1-4 In mountain chain; 5-6 Solitary
- 10 Rille/Canyon. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long.
- 11-12 Ice. 1D6: 1-2 Ice Fissure; 3-4 Ice Discolouration; 5-6 Ice Formation or Structure.
- 13-14 Impact Crater: 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Rich mineral content; 5-6 Recent.
- 15 Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table
- 16 Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
- 17 Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3-6 Plants in extreme environments.
- 18 Animal Life (Fauna): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3-5 Microfauna (microscopic); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours

D66	Water World Targets
11-	Intelligent Alien Life see sub-table

11- 12	Intelligent Allen Life: see sub-table
13	Mineral Deposits: 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
14	Ice. 1D6: 1-2 Ice Fissure; 3-4 Ice Discolouration; 5-6 Ice Formation or Structure.
15-	Undersea Canyon. 1D6: 1-2 Deep; 3-4 Extensive; 5-6 Extremely long.
21	
22-	Island Chain. 1D6: 1-2 Volcanic; 3-4 Coral Reefs; 5-6 Drowned Landscape.
25	
26-	Ocean currents. 1D6: 1-2 Hot spots like El Niño; 3-4 Fast moving; 5-6 Water discolouration.
31	
32	Moon. 1D6: 1-2 Craters; 3-4 Unusual peaks; 5-6 Irregular shape.
33	Seabed Volcano: 1D6: 1-2 In mountain chain; 3-4 Solitary; 5-6 Seabed.
34	Seabed Fumaroles (Thermal Vents): 1D6: 1-2 Steam vents; 3-4 Lava landscape; 5-6 Poison
	gas vents.
35-	Coastal Formations: 1D6: 1-2 Arches and stacks; 3-4 Raised beaches; 5-6 Very High cliffs .
36	
41	Tectonic Plate Boundary: 1D6: 1-2 Rift valley on land; 3-4 Ocean trench; 5-6 Mid-ocean ridge.
42-	Weather: 1D6: 1 High rainfall; 2 High winds; 3 Acid rain; 4 Daily fog events; 5-6 Hurricane.
43	
44	Tides: 1D6: 1-2 Fast moving; 3-4 Tide is very high; 5-6 Uncovers strange rock formations
45-	Anomaly (Surface): see sub-table
51	
52-	Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table
54	
55-	Animal Life (Fauna): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Microfauna (microscopic); 4-5
62	Megafauna (large animals); 6 Interesting or bizarre behaviours
63-	<b>Plant Life (Flora):</b> 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem: 3 Plants in extreme environments: 4

63- Plant Life (Flora): 1D6: 1-2 Interesting ecosystem; 3 Plants in extreme environments; 4

66 carnivorous plants; 5-6 Large tree-type plants

2D6	Hot Jupiter Targets
2	Dust Ring

- 3 Storm
- 4 Planetoid Belt: see sub-table
- 5 Cloud Formations
- 6 High Speed Winds
- 7 High Speed Winds
- 8 Radiation Belt Storm
- 9 Hot Spot
- 10 Aurora
- 11 Moon: Rocky Planet: see sub-table
- 12 Radio Emissions

#### 2D6 Gas Giant Targets

- 2 Dust Ring
- 3 Storm
- 4 Radiation Belt
- 5 Cloud Formations
- 6 Moon: Rocky Planet: see sub-table
- 7 Moon: Iceball World: see sub-table
- 8 High Speed Winds
- 9 Planetoid Belt: see sub-table
- 10 Aurora
- 11 Ice Ring
- 12 Radio Emissions



#### 2D6 Planetoid Belt Targets

- 2 Fault Line or Crevasse
- 3 Unusual Peak
- 4 Loose and shifting conglomeration of rocky bodies
- 5 Gravel Field
- 6 Mineral Deposits. 1D6: 1-2 radioactive; 3-4 high-value; 5-6 unusual composition
- 7 Fault Line or Crevasse
- 8 Irregular Shape
- 9 Deep crater
- 10 Recent impact crater
- 11 Sinkhole or Cave
- 12 Anomaly (Orbit): see sub-table

#### 2D6 Intelligent Alien Life \*

- 2-3 Colony of advanced alien travellers of TL 9 + 1D6.
- 4-5 Large non-biped alien with a TL 1 iron-age, city-based society.
- 6 Upright bipeds. TL 0 tribal hunter-gatherer culture.
- 7-8 Intelligent creatures. Easily overlooked as some ubiquitous and unassuming life-form. On Earth that might be turtles, crows, chimpanzees or coral.
- 9 Large non-biped alien with a TL 2 scientifically-aware culture with some urbanization.
- 10-11 Intelligent megafauna. On Earth that would be whales, giant squid or elephants.
- 12 Upright bipeds. TL 1 iron-age society with some urbanization. .
- \* Use common sense. Some rolls on this table come from airless Rocky Planets or Iceballs, in which case select from the most suitable entries (for example, 2-3 the 'space colony', or 7-8 the 'intelligent creatures').

#### 2D6 Anomaly (Space)

- 2-3 Abandoned\* Alien Spacecraft or Station
- 4 Abandoned\* Lifeboat
- 5-7 Debris
- 8-9 Abandoned\* Alien Drone/Probe10 Asteroid Cut and Carved By Alien
- Tech 11- Abandoned\* Alien Starship
- 12 Abando
- \* Abandoned is the default, but on a 1D6, a roll of

5-6 indicates it is powered up, active and manned!

#### 2D6 Anomaly (Surface)

- 2-4 Humans. What are *they* doing here?
- 5 Temple or Monument
- 6 Scientific Complex
- 7 Bunker
- 8-9 Markings/Carvings/Glyphs
- 10- Roadway
- 11
- 12 Abandoned\* Alien City or Colony
- \* Abandoned is the default, but on a 1D6,
- a roll of

5-6 indicates it is powered up, active and manned!



# 🗘 2010

# LANDING AND EXPLORATION

I sent Joshi forward into the canyon, where purple-leaved foliage hung like melting polystyrene along the rock wall, and we followed on behind her. But we soon stalled.

"Sir, my goggles are screwed."

"Mine too", I replied, "what's going on here?" My team all complained in heated whispers that their night-vision goggles were KO'd. I radioed base camp, no signal. No power. No radio. Hell!

"Everyone, full alert! Toes, get over here! Joshi, Big Ron, get up front ... take it easy. Slow and steady."

"Sir," announced Naylor, "my torch ain't workin either."

My instinct was to work westwards towards the other team but a distant flurry of gunfire, two loud explosions and a lot of shouting made me think twice.

Joshi whispered back to us. "I can hear movement. I can hear noises"

To my right, close to the rock wall of the canyon, I sensed movement and in the dim starlight, saw what looked like a snake, metres in length rearing up. I put some rounds into it, lighting up the scene with my muzzle flash. Someone behind me screamed. The vegetation was alive! Long black creepers were hovering around us, attracted by what? Our power sources? Our own nervous systems? Joshi hacked at something with her machete, and the rest of the team started firing into the darkness with a blaze of automatic weaponry. It all lit up like daylight, the tendrils flashing forward like monstrous leeches. Naylor thrashed past me, and I let my weapon hang loose to grab at his ankle. Joshi was hacking at the thing with the blade, but before she could cut through, it took him away into the darkness.

I gave the order to retreat, I told the team to stick to the canyon wall and use their machetes. The fear coursed like a drug through our veins. The unknown overwhelmed. We fled the scene, in the sticky and cloying darkness, leaving Naylor to the digestive processes of the things.

So far the Survey Scout campaign has been about that initial survey, jumping into the star system and first working out what is there; and the focussing on one or two of the planets to find something interesting to go and visit. There have been no dramas and no real challenges, apart from a couple of task rolls where failure just means a longer stay in this particular system. This chapter, Landing and Exploration, is the meat of the campaign where drama occurs, challenges overcome and explorers put at risk! Now the scouts are going to earn their wages!





#### Getting to the Planet's Surface and Back

The Player must decide whether he or she wants to land the scout ship on the planet's surface, or to launch a ship's boat instead. Either way, the time required to make a landing will vary with the size of the planet and the thickness of the atmosphere. A rule of thumb follows below, however:

	Ship Ma Dr	inoeuv 'ive	rre Ti	ime to Orb	_	
	1	G	4	35 min	utes	
	2	G	4	25 min	utes	
	3	G		20 min	utes	
	4	G		18 min	utes	
	5	G		16 min	utes	
	6	G		14 min	utes	
World	Size	L	ow Orbit		High Orb	it
Astero	id/	5	km		25 km	
Planet	oid (0)					
Small	(1-4)	8	) km		400 km	
Mediu	m (5-7)	14	40 km		700 km	
Large	(8-10)	2	00 km		1,000 km	
Gas G	iant	1	500 km		8,000 km	

If Asteroid or Small World – halve the time If Large World – multiply the time by 1.5

Ships cannot land on the surface of a Gas Giant, they must either remain in orbit or enter the upper atmosphere where they can skim for hydrogen fuel or conduct sensor readings during the bumpy (and dangerous) atmospheric flight.

If the crew want to take-off and fly to the next survey target on the same planet, assume that this takes just as long as it did to descend from orbit in the first place.

#### The Landing Survey

Now, The Plan has got to go out of the window. In previous SOLO campaigns it was easy to decide what the PCs were going to do, then roll the dice and let the Plan sort out what happened. When a team of explorer scouts descend to a world surface to conduct a survey, they have no idea what the dangers might be (if any) and cannot really assess the viability of their survey plan. The world will surprise them, it may be benign and easy-going, or it may inflict tremendous damage on the team. But then, that is what the PCs are there to determine. Is this world safe? Does it hold useful scientific information? Is there any danger?

Because of this the Plan mechanic is not really used much in the Survey Scout campaign. Scouts are in the dark, although they can organise their survey to the best of their abilities, danger lurks on every planet and they must react to what the planet will throw at them.



#### 1 - Decide on how the survey will go.

Will the team land in a shuttle? Or will the starship land? Will it land close to the target? Is that wise? Perhaps it is best to stand-off several kilometres and ride to the target site in an ATV, on skidoos or on an air/raft. Who will conduct the survey, and – crucially – how long will it take? Choose from a few hours to 1 day, 2 days, 3 days or a week, or simply roll the dice:

1D6	Planned Time to
	Survey Target
1	12 hours
2	24 hours
3	2 days
4	3 days
5	4 days
6	5 days
	8 days

#### 2 - Survey Problems.

At each survey target, once the team have landed and begun to explore and take measurements and samples, **roll once** on the Survey Problem table, below. This provides a problem that must be overcome, usually with an Average skill roll, but sometimes with some creative roleplaying on behalf of the Player! Obviously, a PC can only attempt a skill roll if they are at the survey site. If no-one present has the required skill, then maybe another skill might be used (at a slight -1 penalty) or the roll will have to be made at a -3 penalty for being unskilled. The Player needs to adjudicate.

Problems occur all the time on field trips, TV nature documentaries, scientific expeditions and so on. It's life. The table can be consulted to determine what the nature of that problem was. The problems are fairly generic, since they must be applicable to icy moons, Venusian hell-worlds, Earthlike planets, and everything inbetween. Because of this, the Player will have to use his or her imagination to interpret the result, factoring in his team, the environment and the nature of the survey target. For example, how exactly did the team leader become seriously injured? We are investigating tides on the coast – how does a team member become lost? Where are they? The Player fills in these blanks, writing them up in the campaign diary. If skill rolls need to be made to refine the process, or if a Plan needs to be put in place to deal with a problem, then feel free to expand and elaborate. Use the rules and explore the situation until you, as the Player, are happy that the outcome is reached. A Reaction roll might even be required. Several examples follow to illustrate this process.

A skill roll failure indicates that the survey was impeded or held-up. Look at the **Planned Time to Survey Target Table**, and use the time increment below the one that was initially rolled. So if the survey was due to last 2 days, a failed skill roll will extend that to 3 days.





3 – Gaining Survey Points. I don't know how much information the PCs got from that volcano, do you? Will it help consolidate an established theory? Is it revolutionary? Will it lead to new theories? We simply don't know – but the player characters do. Every survey, once begun will produce survey data and we record this as Survey Points (1D6) and these are added to any Survey Points already gained. After a number of world surveys and several jumps, the team should have a decent Survey Point score. How high can they get this score before they land back at their initial starting point? It is an abstracted measure of the success of their voyage. Exactly what did they find out? A decent haul of Survey Points for a planet is 10.

During a survey of a single target, any failed Survey Problem roll reduces that 1D6 Survey Point roll by -2. Survey of an anomaly, or of intelligent life, will gain a DM of +2, whether successful or not.

D66	Survey Problems	Skill Check Required
11- 12	Radios or sensor malfunction; or a complex sensor sweep is required.	Comms or Sensors
13- 16	Survey equipment malfunctions or suffers damage either from the environment or from use.	Electronics or Mechanics
21	Elusive wildlife must be carefully tracked.	Recon
22	Power systems at the survey site malfunction.	Engineering
23	Explosive charges are needed for seismic study, or to cut a hole in ice or rock.	Demolitions
24- 25	The area is difficult to map or to locate.	Navigation
26	A PC goes missing at the survey site or near to it. Create a Plan.	-
31- 33	A PC is injured at the survey site, or falls ill.	Medicine
34- 36	Difficult travelling conditions (in the vehicle used by the scouts)	Vehicle
41- 42	Computer problems whilst setting up equipment, or when processing survey data.	Computer
43- 44	The environment holds some real dangers that could affect the PCs. If failed, see entry 31-33.	Survival
45- 46	Some of the survey gear needs to be shifted by sheer brute force; there's no way around it.	Strength
51- 52	Wildlife poses a deadly hazard. If failed, see entry 31-33.	Gun Cbt or Melee Cbt
53-	A scientific puzzle, either geological, chemical or biological (depending on the	Science or
54	planetary environment) must be solved before the survey can be completed.	Education
55-	Difficult zero-G or hostile atmospheric conditions must be survived. This may	Zero-G or
56	not be applicable. If so, ignore the roll.	Vacc Suit
61- 63	Equipment destroyed or lost.	9+ to avoid
64	Death of a PC.	8+ to avoid
65- 66	Natural Catastrophe. Roll 6+ to leave the survey site without leaving behind valuable kit or having a PC injured.	6+ to avoid

🗘 S O L O

# RESOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

The Player should not forget that the Survey Scout campaign is still a roleplaying game and not an exercise in world-building. Use the previous sections in SOLO to adjudicate scenario elements, skill rolls, the Plan and regular rolls on the character Reaction table. Do not neglect the Tell Me, D6 mechanic too, which can throw a spanner into the works and really mess up a 'routine' spacewalk or other activity.

Should there be need of a space battle, use either the Fast Play Space Combat variant in Star Trader, or the more detailed All-In-One Space Combat variant (found in Naval Officers).





# Example of Play (2)

This example of play follows the survey of a star system by four scouts in a 100-ton Light Scout ship called the Tycho.

#### Captain Ro Garmin

99AA93 Age 34 4 terms Cr7000

Pilot 2, Vacc 1, Mechanics 1, Gun Cbt 2, Computer 0, Physical Science 0, Medicine 0

Grew up among Belter families. Garmin was once a pirate before he joined the scout service. He was once injured on a desert planet and only just survived. He is in love with an old colleague, Myla. They are a couple.

Navigator Lauren Myla 7567AB Age 34 4 terms Cr2400 Computer 2, Navigation 3, Pilot 1, Air/Raft 1, Carousing 0, Advocate 0, Gun Cbt 0

Born to a wealthy family on a rich world, Myla helped to write new software for the scout service fleet. Garmin used to be a big rival, but now is a good friend and lover. Myla was once responsible for a serious mission failure and she fears repeating the mistake.

Science Officer/Medic Madeline Kuta 729CBA Age 38 5 terms Cr9000 Computer 3, Mechanics 1, Medic 1, Life Science 2, Vacc 1, Physical Science 0, Electronics 0

Kuta grew up on an iceball colony, she is clever and well educated looking down on the scouts in her team. She once made a powerful enemy in the interstellar government. She is a brilliant bio-chemist. She was once betrayed by her best friend - today they o longer talk. Garmin is an old friend, but the friendship ended when Myla entered the picture. Now she is just resentful.

#### Engineer Harry Vanhoen

#### 4775A6 Age 42 6 terms Cr2000

Engineering 1, Gun Cbt 1, Vacc 3, Pilot 2, Mechanics 3, Electronics 1, Streetwise 0, Physical Science 0, Comms 0

Harry grew up on a densely populated planet. He once lost his son in a starship accident several years ago. He chose this mission to get away - he has learned a terrible secret. He is addicted to a hallucinogenic drug – this is a secret. Harry is good friends with Kuta, despite their differing IQs!

We start on Helix, a small outpost world occupying hex 0410 of an empty, unexplored subsector.

# Helix D442210-8 Poor, NonIndustrial G

Helix is (in SOLO terms) a desert world, dry and arid with some water bodies around which the few hundred colonists have settled. This is a corporate outpost, perhaps established to support some asteroid mining further out in the star system. The Tycho is fuelled up at the frontier starport and sets off into the unknown, the crew's first target star system is 0509 (refer to 0509's star system chart on page 114).

The crew meet on old acquaintance of theirs, a mercenary out on Helix, probably working as a base security guard. I roll for a Reaction roll whilst the team spend a week in jump but the roll (8+) is made: no arguments. I check for a Shipboard Event and get a broken plasma coil that must be replaced. This can be done in jump and is routine (+2). Harry Vanhoen replaces it without fuss.

# 0509 Gamma X585000-0 [Garden]

Seven days later the Tycho emerges from jumpspace in hex 0509, Myla brought the ship out into the Inner System. Next she scans the system and this takes 3 hours, it creates a complete listing of all the planetary bodies within the star system. At this point the 0509 system is created using the procedure on page 111. Next a 9 hour survey is conducted to locate 3 potential survey targets. The team decide to assign all three rolls to the garden world 509 Gamma The survey targets were rolled and were:

- extensive canyon system within the polar latitudes
- coastal features very high sea cliffs in an arid, desert climate
- an extremely long canyon system in a dry, temperate climate

Travel time to the garden world is 45 million km, taking the Tycho 1 day 2 hrs to reach orbit around it. Whilst travelling I roll for a Shipboard Event and find that the crew hold a crew entertainment night, maybe this is the 'last hurrah' before the hard, hazardous work begins. There's probably beer, food and a movie.

#### Survey 1: Coastal Cliffs

The Tycho lands on the edge of high cliffs, with vistas out across a small sea. The planned survey should take 5 days. Now ... what goes wrong? I roll on the Survey Problem table and find out that some equipment was destroyed or lost (the 9+ 'saving throw' was failed). What? I imagine that a lot of the survey will be conducted from the air/raft, flying slowly along the face of the cliffs, perhaps using some kind of kit – a laser imaging device perhaps. That might topple off its tripod and into the sea below. But why? Bad weather? Updrafts? How about native wildlife, big leathery flying creatures that nest on the cliffs, that mob the air/raft? I think I'll also check to see if Myla can retain control of the vehicle. She does, but I can imagine it's a bit dented! I roll for a PC Reaction and find Kuta is stubborn, perhaps she blames Myla for the loss and refuses to fly in the air/raft with her on this survey. They must rig up





some other system of scanning these huge cliffs, and that, along with rock samples, and geological surveys pushes the mission to 8 days (it had been 5, but failing the 'saving throw' meant the next time increment on the survey time table had to be used). I imagine Vanhoen rigs up a probe drone to conduct some of the scanning work. While he does that, Garmin and Kuta (both of whom have Mechanics skill) spend an afternoon repairing the damage done to the air/raft by the flying creatures. They leave the site with 2 SURVEY POINTS

#### Survey 2: Extensive Canyon System

After the 8 days are up, Garmin flies the Tycho out to site 2, the extensive canyon system located in a tundra climate. I imagine a vast fjord system, but imagine the region has been uplifted and it is now miles from the sea, a complex maze of twisting canyons, peppered with snow drifts and yellow-orange lichen-analogues. The problem here is that some of the survey equipment malfunctions. However, between them, the team fix it. I decide it was a probe drone that was going to map the bulk of the dry fjords remotely. Vanhoen fixes it with an Electronics roll. I decide to roll for a Reaction, and find out that Myla and Garmin argue. Why? I guess it is because Garmin spent all that time with Kuta, and Myla knows thy used to be good friends, and that Kuta is riven with bitterness. I decide Garmin puts his foot down: 'It's all part of the job, this is going to be a long mission, get used to it!' After 3 days Garmin flies the Tycho out of the fjords to later land at the long canyon, the third survey target. They leave the site with 2 SURVEY POINTS.

#### Survey 3: Long Canyon

This 900 km-long canyon sits on the equator, in a dry temperate zone (much like Greece or California). The survey should only take a day. They look at the stratification of the canyon beds, at its source and decide on the method of its formation, its age and its seasonal changes (I decide it's summer and the canyon is dry). What might the survey problem be here? Someone falls ill. I go for an easy option, Vanhoen has been caught unconscious under the influence of those hallucinogenic drugs, probably on the ship – in engineering. Kuta is called but she fails her Medicine skill test. This adds another day to the survey and knocks a couple of Survey Points off. Vanhoen comes clean about his addiction, but does not say why he is reliant on the drugs (I think it relates to the death of his son). I can imagine there is a team meeting in the ship's lounge about it. They decide where to go next, and Garmin suggests heading out to the Outer Zone to look at that iceball planet, 0509 Epsilon. They lift off and leave the site with only 1 SURVEY POINT. In total then, they earned 5 SURVEY POINTS for the exploration of 509 Gamma. With 10 being an average, that is not great!

# 0509 Epsilon X100000-0 [Garden]

Garmin takes the Tycho into orbit (25 minutes) and then flies her to the iceball planet 0509 Epsilon in the Outer System, some 255 million km distant. This takes 2 and a half days. During that time I make a Shipboard Event roll and find that a crewman conducts experiments or tests; perhaps it is Kuta, analysing the fjord data looking for origins and processes. Tycho enters a 400km orbit. Now Myla must conduct a fresh survey to look for possible targets. This takes 10 hours, but she eventually (with the help of Kuta and the rest of the team) settle on three interesting targets:





- *impact crater very deep*
- deep rille or canyon
- ice fissures with interesting patterns

#### Survey 1: Impact Crater

A 13 minute descent from orbit brings the Tycho down into the crater. The team christen it 'Nimbus'. This should be a 12 hour survey, but ... something goes wrong (something always goes wrong!) and there are 'difficult travelling conditions'. Mmmm, what are those? What would impede the air/raft on an airless Lunar-like planet? How about superfine dust, maybe pulverized by the meteor impact, that is swirled up into clouds by the air/raft's grav drive... a bit like iron-filings coming too near magnets. I know this is an icy wold, but I do like this idea.

The team will have to walk everywhere in their vacc suits, knee-deep in fine superdust... Myla tries to recalibrate the air/raft drive assembly with an air/raft skill roll, but she fails. The survey of the crater is extended to 24 hours. I roll for a reaction – predictably, Myla loses her temper when she fails to get the air/raft drives realigned. I can see Kuta goading her a little about this. They leave the site with 0 SURVEY POINTS.

#### Survey 2: Rille

The team shift the Tycho to a crevasse, long and sinuous, called a rille. It takes 13 minutes to fly that distance. Garmin lands deep at the floor of the canyon (I make a pilot roll, just to check). Here the team prepare for a 5 day survey. The problem here is that equipment is damaged, presumably by the hostile, froze environment. It is very, very cold down here – and pitch dark. On balance the vacc suits will be likely to suffer, but Garmin makes a decent Vacc Suit skill check and all is well for the rest of the 5 days. I check for Reactions, but the team make the 8+ roll. They leave the site with 5 SURVEY POINTS.

#### Survey 3: Ice Fissures

Next the ship is flown to the final survey target on the planet, a series of geometric ice fissures. This should be a 12 hour survey. Immediately (so the table says) Kuta has computer problems and cannot process the radar imaging data from a probe drone being used to map the fissures precisely. She amends the software and reinstalls a driver or two, fixing the problem! I roll for a reaction. Interesting. Kuta 'seeks solace', effectively retreating into her cabin on the ship. Why? She fixed the computer problem, didn't she? She refuses to work on the survey. Garmin investigates, but she locks him out. Myla tries to take over the computer operation of the probes, but they are not responding - she failed a Difficult (-2) Computer roll. The survey is extended to 24 hours. Garmin tries to approach her again (I add a +1, for 'wearing her down') but fails. The ship sits there for a second day. Why is she acting like this?

Maybe the fissure is similar to a phenomenon she worked on years ago (I've just looked at her character sheet) where her best friend betrayed her and stole her findings, taking credit for a fascinating type of extremophile life. Maybe Kuta fears the same will happen again, this time her work will be stolen by Kuta or Garmin – or





both. This supposes there might be extremophile life there... I roll a D6, on 4-6, there is a unique type of hardy life living inside those icy fissures. Yes, there is!

I let Garmin try an Edu roll again to talk Kuta out, and with a +2 bonus now, it is very likely. The survey is over and the ship heads for the jump point and out to another star system. Even though Kuta solved the survey 'problem', the resulting emotional fallout must have affected the findings. I decide that I will act as if the survey problem was not resolved. I roll 1 for the number of SURVEY POINTS gained, but figure if extremophile life was discovered that was important enough to give Kuta apoplectic fits, that figure is surely wrong. It decide they leave the site with 4 SURVEY POINTS for a total of 9 for this little iceball planet. Now that is a little better.

After the crew have refuelled the Tycho from the planet's sea, Garmin heads for the jump point, 1 hour 34 minutes distant. The Tycho enters jumpspace, en route for 0407. What wonders will the team discover there?



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## SOLO CHARACTER SHEET

	TYPE avellers	s ts	MISSION OF THE PC's Reaction Roll:							
RANK	NAME	STR	DEX		Survey Point Total:       D     INT       EDU     SOC       AGE     TERMS					
SKILLS	SKILLS									
LIFE EVEN	TS									
RELATION	SHIPS									
GEAR										
NOTES										
RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS	
SKILLS	SKILLS									
LIFE EVEN	TS									
RELATION	SHIPS									
GEAR										
NOTES										



# C) SOLO

# SOLO CHARACTER SHEET



RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS	
SKILLS										
LIFE EVEN	LIFE EVENTS									
RELATIONSHIPS										
GEAR	GEAR									
NOTES	NOTES									

RANK	NAME	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	SOC	AGE	TERMS
SKILLS									
LIFE EVENTS									
RELATIONSHIPS									
GEAR									
NOTES									



# C) SOLO

## SHIP RECORD SHEET

NAME	CLASS	TONNAGE	ARMOUR POINTS	
JUMP	MANEOUVRE	ENDURANCE (WEEKS)	CARGO	
HARDPOINTS/TU	JRRETS		ULL POINTS	
PROBES		SMALL CRAFT/VE	HICLES	
OPERATING COS	STS/TRIP			
LIFE SUPPORT _ TOTAL:	FUEL REFIN	EDUNREFIN	ED	
OPERATING COSTS/MONTH				
MORTGAGE TOTAL:	MORTGAGE MAINTENANCE SALARIES TOTAL:			
SHIPS LOCKER				
CREW MANIFES	Γ	FITTING & EQUIPME	NT	





## SYSTEM SURVEY SHEET

7171	EM 70	RVET SHEET		
SYSTE	M		SURVEY POIN	rs:
Orbit	Body	Notes:		
0				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				Mark the Boundary
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				OUTER SYSTEM

SURVEY TARGETS	
Planet	Target details & notes
l	

# 💭 SOLO

SUBSECTOR MAP





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