Starfaring Exploration for Delving Deeper and OSR
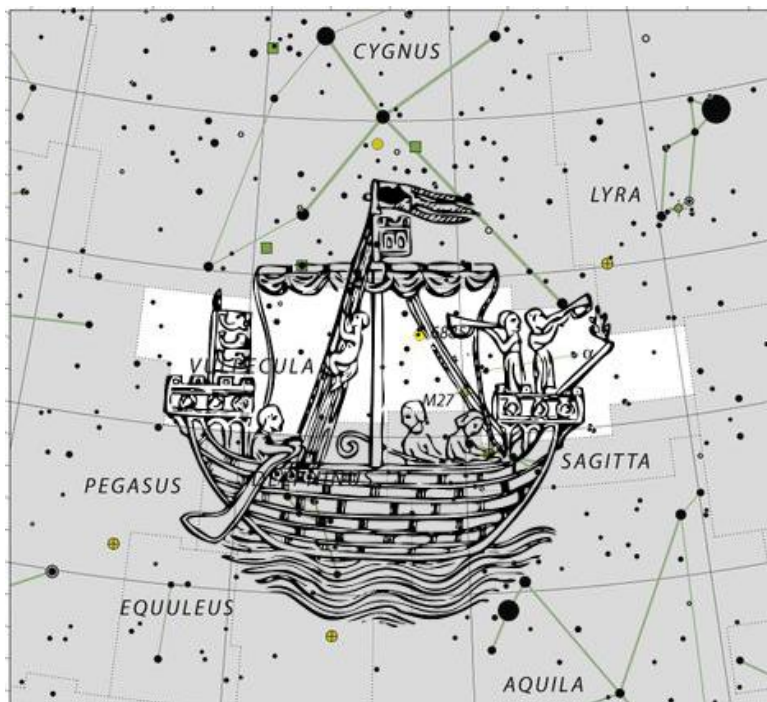

By Brett Slocum

Weird Realm Games

Starfaring Exploration for Delving Deeper and OSR

v1.1

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson. Your creativity set us free; free to make our own worlds, our own rules.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Simon Bull for creating such a great retro-clone.

Weird Realm Games

Starfaring Exploration

Starfaring ships travel in the Æther Sea driven by the solar winds; sometimes they are aided or harried by the fickle ætheric currents. Outer space regions unknown to the players can be mapped in advance by the referee or as they are explored. The principal features should be placed thoughtfully with the remainder being filled in by random determination.

In addition to its terrain type, each hex can possibly contain one (or more) distinctive features. Both can be determined as below:

Table S.1 Random Space Terrain

2d6	Random Terrain	Random Terrain Adjacent to Hex of Known Type				
		Space	Nebula	Asteroids	Dust	Storm
2	Dust	Dust	Space	Space	Space	Asteroids
3	Dust	Space	Asteroids	Space	Asteroids	Storm
4	Space	Space	Nebula	Dust	Asteroids	Space
5	Space	Asteroids	Space	Asteroids	Dust	Storm
6	Nebula	Space	Nebula	Asteroids	Space	Dust
7	Asteroids	Space	Space	Space	Space	Space
8	Nebula	Space	Nebula	Asteroids	Dust	Storm
9	Space	Nebula	Space	Space	Dust	Nebula
10	Space	Space	Nebula	Asteroids	Dust	Storm
11	Space	Space	Space	Space	Space	Space
12	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Space

Table S.2 Random Space Features

2d6	Space	Nebula	Asteroids	Dust	Storm
2	Special	Current	.	Current	.
3	Confluence	Current†	Special	.	Special
4	.	.	.	.	Current
5	Current	.	.	.	Current
6	Planet	.	.	.	Wormhole
7	Planet	.	.	.	.
8	.	Planet	.	.	.
9	.	.	Planet	Planet	.
10	.	.	.	.	.
11	Wormhole	Wormhole	Wormhole	Wormhole	.
12	Starbase	Starbase‡	Starbase‡	Starbase	Starbase‡

† Roll d6 again: 1 = Special, and 6 = Starbase.
‡ Add a wormhole.

Asteroids: a group of dwarf planets and smaller bodies.
Confluence: a confluence of ætheric currents. Add two ætheric currents and roll d6: 1 = Special, and 6 = Planet.
Current: an ætheric current
Dust: a dust or dark nebula
Nebula: a gas or emission nebula
Planet: roll on the Random Planet table.
Special: roll a d6: 1-3 = Lair, 4-5 = Derelict, 6 = Worm hole.
Starbase: stronghold of a powerful NPC. See Starbase section that follows.
Storm: space storm
Wormhole: a shortcut between regions of space. When a ship enters a wormhole, they exit another wormhole connected to it without passing through the space between.

Note that ætheric currents and wormholes span several hexes. The referee should connect these features without dicing when all other adjoining hexes have been resolved without these occurring.

Table S.3 Random Planet	
d12	**Planet Type**
2	Desert
3	Desert
4	Ice
5	Water
6	Forest/Jungle
7	Temperate
8	Forest/Jungle
9	Ice
10	Temperate
11	Water
12	Exotic

The Random Planet table gives the predominant terrain of the planet. They will be inhabited by man-types and monsters. Use the terrain tables from Delving Deeper to create random areas on these planets.

Time and Movement

Distances are measured in star miles, an abstract representation of the vast distances in space. The standard movement rates in inches are therefore the number of star miles covered per day. Each hex is assumed to be 6 star miles across, so the standard movement rates can be translated easily into a number of hexes covered per day. Planetary space (up to 3 hexes from a planet) has a scale where each 1" of movement rate represents 1 space mile traveled per day. Interplanetary space, however, is so vast and largely free of obstruction that sailing rates are improved threefold such that 1" of movement represents 3 star miles traveled per day. Travel through Nebula, Dust, and Asteroids is at half movement rate. Wormholes have been cleared of obstacles and the travel rate is unaffected by terrain.

Exploration in space is otherwise like seafaring exploration, except that players must have a space-going vessel. The same types of ships used in seafaring exploration can be used in starfaring exploration (except rafts), if they have the proper magical devices installed. Two common forms of propulsion are solar sails and ætheric oars. Other more exotic forms of propulsion are possible. Oars can be replaced by other labor-intensive propulsion methods. For instance, dwarven war galleys may have dozens of dwarven laborers shoveling coal into the ætheric steam engines. A magic user or cleric is required at the helm to operate the magical propulsion.

Oared vessels such as galleys and longships are not restricted by solar wind direction, but are unable to withstand the stresses of interplanetary space. These are limited to planetary space, except in calm space weather.

Sailed vessels such as merchants and warships can run swiftly before the solar wind, but otherwise must progress by a series of turns and tacks at impaired speed. Travel directly into the solar wind is generally impossible.

Movement rates for oared ships assume a full and well-trained crew. Poor or incomplete crews can achieve half the listed rate.

Table S.3 Starfaring Exploration Rate				
	Movement Rate		Hexes per Day	
Transportation	Oared	Sailing	Planetary	Interplanetary
Sailboat	.	6"	1	3
Raft	6"	6"	1	1
Galley, small	12"	.	2	2
Galley, large	18"	.	3	3
Longship	12"	12"	2	2
Merchant, small	.	18"	3	9
Merchant, large	.	12"	2	6
Warship	.	6"	1	3

Movement rates for sailing ships assume running before the solar wind. All other movement is at half rate. Note that sailing rates are faster in interplanetary space due to sailing unimpeded day and night. One hex should be added to movement rates when traveling with or subtracted when traveling against an ætheric current.

Reserves

All sailing ships, except sailboats and rafts, carry reserve oars. All oared ships carry reserve sails to be used if necessary. These allow movement at half rate.

Resting

All crews require a full day of rest after six days at sea or immediately after weathering a space storm.

Visibility

With the naked eye, visibility is limited to one hex (6 star miles). With a spyglass or other visual assistance, a sailor can see up to two hexes (12 star miles) away in clear weather. However, space weather conditions can severely restrict visibility.

Space Weather

The solar wind strength and direction should be determined each day in space. Throw one six-sided die to determine which hex face the solar wind is blowing from and two six-sided dice to determine wind strength.

2d6	Solar Wind	Sailing	Rowing
Table S.4 Space Weather and Ship Speed			
2-3	Dead calm	No sailing	Normal speed
4-7	Moderate	½ speed	Normal speed
8-9	Fresh	Normal speed	Normal speed
10-11	Strong	+6" (1 hex)	Normal speed
12	Storm	Special	Special

Strong Solar Winds

Sailboats and galleys will capsize in strong solar winds in interplanetary space on a throw of 1-2 on a six-sided die each day.

Space Storms

Navigation is impossible in space storm conditions and any vessel will capsize on a throw of 1-2 on a six-sided die each day. Any vessel that does not capsize is instead moved 2-7 hexes in a direction secretly determined by the referee and is immediately considered to be lost.

Becoming Lost

A ship's captain will have no difficulty navigating a known route so long as the space weather remains fair. However, should the weather turn nasty, there is the possibility of becoming lost. The referee should secretly throw a six-sided die for the players each day spent in strong solar winds—a 1-2 indicating they have become lost. If the players are lost the referee should move them an unplanned distance/direction on his map that turn without alerting them.

Starbases

A starbase is an orbital platform, a planetary base, or asteroid at a strategic locale such as a current, confluence of currents, wormhole, planet, or asteroid. The principal resident of the starbase should be determined randomly, as follows:

The resident will be of 9th to 12th experience level and will be attended by an entourage as indicated below. These are as for a lair of the appropriate type or else 1-6 individuals where no lair type is given. Heroes and anti-heroes indicate bands of 3-18 fighters of 3rd to 6th experience level (determined individually).

The resident may also have one or several lieutenants of level 5-8. A fighter is 50% likely to be attended by a cleric or a magic-user. A magic-user is 50% likely to be attended by a fighter or 1-6 apprentices (magic-users of level 3-6). A cleric is 50% likely to be attended by a fighter or 1-6 assistants (clerics of level 3-6). Check separately for either in all cases.

Regardless of the above, a starbase is occupied by a force of 30-180 soldiers with a similar number of supporting staff. If the principal resident is chaotic these are 50% likely to be orcs; otherwise, they are men.

Should the characters pass near a starbase, the resident's ships will spot them with a throw of 6 on a six-sided die at two hexes distance, with a throw of 5-6 at one hex distance, and with a throw of 3-6 if they pass within the same hex as the starbase itself. If they are spotted, or if they hail the starbase directly, the resident will respond to their presence.

Table 2.16 Stronghold Resident

d6	Align	Class	Entourage (d6)		
1	C	Anti-Cleric	1. Anti-Heroes	2. Lycanthropes	3. Medusae
			4. Mummies	5. Spectres	6. Vampires
2	C	Magic User	1. Basilisks	2. Chimerae	3. Dragons
			4. Efreet	5. Elemental	6. Gargoyles
3	C	Fighter	1. Anti-Heroes	2. Dragons	3. Giants
			4. Manticores	5. Ogres	6. Trolls
4	N	Fighter	1. Djinn	2. Giants	3. Griffons*
			4. Heroes	5.Lycanthropes	6. Wyverns
5	N	Magic User	1. Centuars	2. Djinn	3. Dragons
			4. Elemental	5. Gorgons	6. Minotaurs
6	L	Cleric	1. Centaurs	2. Elementals	3. Heroes
			4. Hippogriffs*	5. Rocs*	6. Treants

* With riders.

A chaotic starbase holder will always attempt to slay, capture, enslave, or deceive the players to gain whatever treasure or knowledge they might have or hold out against them if they are overly powerful.

A resident fighter will challenge the highest-level fighter to a joust. Should the player joust and win, he earns the right to the challenger's hospitality for up to a full month for himself and his company—although a chaotic or neutral challenger may prove reluctant to pay!

Should the player joust and lose, the challenger will demand his mount. If the players lack a fighter or decline the contest, the challenger will levy a toll of 1,000-4,000 gp for their passage. If they cannot pay, the fighter may send them on a mission to find gold.

A magic-user will exact a toll of one magic item of his choice from the player characters or else 1,000-6,000 gp if they have nothing desirable. If they cannot pay, the magic-user may geas them to collect the necessary treasure on some quest. The magic-user will take his pick of any treasure recovered, or perhaps all of it.

A lawful cleric will require a tribute for his temple amounting to one-tenth part of whatever wealth the player characters have. If they cannot pay, the cleric may quest them to perform some lawful mission—which will earn them his hospitality if completed successfully. An anti-cleric may demand one-fourth part of whatever wealth the player characters have. If they cannot pay, he might simply slay them or else quest them to perform some chaotic mission—which might be their undoing.

Encounters in Space

Wandering monsters occur in outer space much as they do in the wilderness. The referee need not check for wandering monsters while the players are within 3 hexes (18 star miles) of a friendly port, but once out in space proper they should check once each day in interplanetary space or twice each day near planets. An additional check should be made each day if the players are lost. A throw of 6 on a six-sided die indicates an encounter will occur.

When an encounter is indicated, determine the type of monster by dicing on the appropriate starfaring encounter table. If the players are traveling near a planet, an encounter is equally likely to occur on planet as in space. In this case, use the appropriate wilderness encounter table for the type of planet.

Surprise

Surprise occurs in space (as it does in the underworld) with a throw of 5-6 on a six-sided die. If the players are surprised, the enemy ships or monsters will come at them emerging suddenly out of dust clouds or nebulae, appearing from behind quickly moving meteors or comets, or surfacing unexpectedly from a planetary atmosphere.

Encounter Distance

If either party is surprised an encounter will begin at 1-6 star-miles distance and the surprised party will be unable to respond for one turn; otherwise, an encounter will begin at 4-24 star-miles distance. Shipboard artillery range is typically 30 star-miles.

Monster Reaction

Monster reaction to the players in space is as per the underworld.

Evasion and Pursuit

Evasion and pursuit in space is as per the wilderness with the following additional considerations:
- Low visibility occurs in dust clouds, nebulae, asteroid fields, and storms.

Table S.5 Starfaring Encounter Tables

1-20	Planetary Space	Interplanetary Space
1	Hazard	Hazard
2	Primitive man-types	Shipwreck
3	Monsters	Monsters
4	Man-types	Man-types
5	Demihumans	Demihumans
6	Ancient race, demigods (advanced tech, magic, powers, or form)	Ancient race, demigods (advanced tech, magic, powers, or form)
7	Monsters hiding in debris or wreckage	Mind flayer ship
8	Man-types	Beholder ship
9	Demihumans	Demihumans
10	Shipwreck, survivors on 5-6	Starmen
11	Humans	Humans
12	Human merchants	Human merchants
13	Human pirates	Human pirates
14	Starmen	Starmen
15	Undead	Undead
16	Adventurers	Adventurers
17	Star Dragon	Star Dragon
18	Doppelganger ship	Doppelganger ship
19	Space creatures	Space creatures
20	Demihumans	Space leviathan

Encounters

Adventurers: fighters, clerics, magic users, and thieves on a ship.
Ancient race, demigods: beings with advanced tech, magic, powers, and/or forms.
Beholder ship: the charmed crews of these marauders will do anything for them.
Demi-humans: elves, dwarves, or halflings in a ship.
Doppelganger ship: the ship has chameleon skin, making it look like another ship.
Hazard: space storm, solar flare, meteor swarm, comet, nova, etc.
Man-types: all men and other creatures of same basic proportions including androids, cavemen, dwarfs, elves, gnolls, gnomes, goblins, halflings, hobgoblins, kobolds, lizardmen, mermen, starmen, nixies, orcs, and pixies.
Merchant ships: man-type trading vessels with large cargo capacity.
Military ships: war vessels with heavy marine contingents crewed by man-types.
Mind flayer ship: these psionic beings and their warped crews are looking for toys.
Monsters: non-aquatic monsters, hiding in wreckage or debris,
Pirate ships: man-type corsairs hunting merchant ship prey.

Primitive man-types: very low-tech beings, riding rafts in planetary space.
Shipwreck: damaged ship, man-type survivors on 5-6.
Space creatures: fish, rays, starfish, octopi, squids, blobs, space dinosaurs, etc.
Space leviathan: enormous whales of the ætheric currents.
Star dragon: these enormous monsters live in space.
Starmen ships: this race lives entirely in space on their unusual open structure ships.
Undead: they don't need to breathe and don't need ships.

Starfaring Combat

Vessels can engage in ship-to-ship (or ship-to-space monster) combat. Ships are treated much as monsters—having hull dice instead of hit dice, and hull points instead of hit points.

When ship-to-ship (or ship-to-space monster) combat occurs, the referee should use the wilderness combat scale (1" to 10 yards and one minute turns) to resolve maneuvering and missile fire as the combatants approach one another.

	Hull		
Vessel	Dice	Artillery	Crew
Sailboat	1	.	2-4 sailors
Raft	1	.	2-4 rowers
Galley, small	5	1	6-16 sailors, 24-64 rowers, 12-32 marines
Galley, large	8	2	12-32 sailors, 36-96 rowers, 18-48 marines
Longship	6	.	30-80 rower/marines
Merchant, small	4	.	9-24 sailors, 6-16 marines
Merchant, large	7	.	18-48 sailors, 15-40 marines
Warship	10	4	15-40 sailors, 30-80 marines

Table S.6 Ship Statistics

Solar wind direction, tactical positions, and vessel facings can be marked on a scale map if desired or simply noted as closing distances. Oared ships can produce a burst of speed during combat, adding 6" to movement rate for up to three turns after which the crew is exhausted.

Missile Fire

Shipboard artillery may be fired every other turn while spells and missiles may be loosed each turn. Normal missiles are ineffective against ship hulls but are allowed their maximum outdoor range, giving due consideration to space weather conditions.

Small galleys are assumed to carry a single artillery battery on the fore deck. Large galleys carry two batteries (one fore and one aft), and warships carry four batteries (one each fore, aft, port, and starboard). Artillery hits cause 2-12 hull points of damage and will hole a ship on any score of 10 or more hull points.

A holed ship will flounder in 3-18 combat turns (minutes) unless repairs are made.

Ramming

Medieval-style ships are not generally built for ramming, but a faster ship may ram a slower ship in the side, circumstances permitting. The ramming ship sustains one hull die damage while the rammed ship sustains half the rammer's hull dice (rounded down) in damage. If 10 or more hull points are sustained the ship is holed and will fall toward the nearest planet or other body in 3-18 turns, if in planetary space. In interplanetary space, they will simply slow to a stop and flounder. Meanwhile, boarding may ensue.

Melee

When ships ram, grapple, or come along side for boarding the referee is advised to use the dungeon combat scale (1" to 10 ft and one minute rounds) to resolve any hand-to-hand combat. Ship deck plans can be used much as dungeon maps for this purpose. Troops fleeing from combat will only pitch themselves overboard in fair weather near to a planet; otherwise they will surrender.

Suffocation

The nature of ætheric space results in every object being surrounded by a bubble of oxygen proportional to its size. A human-sized body has a bubble of air that will last 3d6 turns. A ship carries enough air for each crewmember for a cruise of 4-8 months. Once this air is used up, normal-types die in d6 rounds, hero-types die in 2d6 rounds, and superhero-types die in 3d6 rounds. Air is replenished on every planet landed on.