

## EARTH SPACE PATROL

By Joe Pruitt

The Earth Space Patrol (ESP) is a military and law enforcement agency operated jointly by and sworn to protect and serve all members of the Interstellar Confederation of Earth (ICE). The brave men and women of the ESP who man its ships and patrol its spaceways are the finest force ever assembled, dedicated to defending the ICE from any and all threats.

At least that's what the brochure says.

In reality, the ESP is chronically undermanned and underfunded, as each member world of the ICE prefers to allocate the bulk of their resources to their own defense force, leaving only the leftovers (in equipment and personnel) for the ESP.

In this game, you play a member of the beleaguered ESP, often facing overwhelming odds when confronted by threats to the entire ICE that short-sighted member governments either cannot or will not address. You will start as a lowly Ensign fresh out of the ESP Academy on your first assignment. As you complete missions you will increase in Rank and Skill, and may eventually rise to command your own ship or patrol unit.

While you may encounter aliens, robots, or other unusual creatures or beings during your adventures, it is assumed that all players' characters are human. Players wishing to play non-human characters should discuss with the Game Master ahead of time.

### Character Creation

#### Skills

The first step is to create the character you will play. All aspects of your character will be recorded on your Personnel Record Sheet, at the end of these rules.

Each character has six Skills that represent the majority of tasks they may be called upon to perform in the course of their duties.

1. **Operations** is your ability to pilot ships and vehicles of the ESP.
2. **Engineering** is your ability to repair and maintain the systems that keep ESP vehicles and equipment operational and mobile.
3. **Medicine** is your ability to treat injuries and illnesses.
4. **Science** is your ability to detect and analyze unknown and unusual phenomena.
5. **Security** is your ability to face enemies in personal combat, as well as a measure of your agility and strength.
6. **Tactical** is your ability to operate a ship's combat systems and weapons.

Each of these Skills starts with a score of 1, and can go as high as 5.

During your time at the ESP Academy, you had a Major and a Minor field of study. Roll one six-sided dice (referred to as a D6) twice and refer to the list of skill above.

The first roll is your Major; record that in the box marked "Major" on your Personnel Record Sheet, and add 2 points to your score in that Skill.

The second roll is your Minor; record that in the box marked "Minor" on your Personnel Record Sheet, and add 1 to your score in that Skill.

If you get the same result for your Major and Minor, assume you undertook an advanced course of study in that field at the expense of other subjects; record that subject in both the "Major" and "Minor" boxes and add 3 to your score in that Skill.

You may also add 1 to any one Skill of your choice. This represents an area in which you naturally excel or have taken an interest and studied on your own. It can be your Major or Minor Skill, or a completely different one.

#### Rank

There are six ranks in the ESP. From lowest to highest, they are:

- Ensign
- Sub-Lieutenant
- Lieutenant
- Sub-Commander
- Commander
- Captain

(There is also one Admiral, who commands the entire ESP.)

You begin as an Ensign fresh out of the Academy. As you complete missions and gain experience, you will rise in Rank. Each time your Rank increases, you may increase one Skill by 1 point.

When you achieve the Rank of Captain, you will be given a ship or unit of your own to command. At this point, it is time to remain behind and oversee others as they perform missions under your command (i.e. you have "won" the game and your days of going on missions are over, though you may always continue playing with a new character).

#### Missions

Each time you complete a mission, fill in one box in the "Missions" section of your Personnel Record Sheet and roll a D6. If the result is equal to or less than the number of Missions you have completed, you have earned a promotion. Increase your Rank to the next level and erase all the boxes in the "Mission" section. Start filling them in again as you complete new missions.

#### Wounds

When you are injured (whether as a result of combat or some other cause), fill in one box in the "Wounds" section of your Personnel Record Sheet and roll a D6. If the result is equal to or less than the number of Wounds you have received, you have been killed.

Wounds can be healed by someone (yourself or another character) using the Medicine Skill (see "Using Skills" and "Healing" below for how to do this).

#### Equipment

All ESP personnel are issued a Blaster Pistol and a Communicator, and one additional item from the partial list of standard ESP gear below. You may carry up to four additional items, some of which may be issued to you at the start of a mission.

Item	Description
Blaster Rifle	Longer range than pistol
Force Shield	50% chance of negating a Wound
Med Pack	Used to heal Wounds
Star-Light	High Tech flashlight that illuminates a target without emitting a visible beam of light
Tool Kit	Used to repair, maintain, and modify equipment
Tri-Scanner	Used to detect and analyze unknown and unusual phenomena.

### How To Play

#### Using Skills

When attempting a challenging task for which there is a reasonable possibility of failure, determine which Skill is most relevant to the task and roll a D6. If the result is equal to or less than your score in the relevant Skill, you succeed; if greater, you fail. This is called a Skill Test.

#### Combat (Personal)

Personal combat refers to combat between two or more individuals (as opposed to ships or vehicles), whether or not weapons are used.

When combat occurs, each combatant gets to take a turn moving a short distance and performing one action (usually attacking an enemy). Unless you are surprised, you get to act first.

All movement takes place before any other actions occur

(everyone moves, then everyone attacks). Ordinary people can move 10 feet per turn. Some combatants (animals, robots, aliens, vehicles) may move slower or faster.

After all combatants move, you attack by using your Security Skill. Roll a D6 and compare to your Security Skill. If successful, you inflict one Wound (possibly more than one depending on your weapon) on your enemy. Damage to enemies is calculated the same way as for your character (see "Wounds" above).

After all players' characters act, the enemies get to attack. Enemies have the same six Skills as players' characters, though they will probably only have one Skill with a score of 2 (representing whatever their job is), with a score of 1 for the rest. Important and/or more highly trained enemies may have higher scores in one or more Skills.

### Healing

Even if you survive a fight, you may have one or more Wounds. A successful Medicine Skill Test can erase one Wound. The person making the Test must have access to a Med Pack (which is used up in the attempt, successful or not) or medical facilities.

### Combat (Space)

Combat between space ships is handled differently. As with personal combat, players act first unless surprised. Also the same is that all combatants move first, then attack.

Movement is handled more abstractly than in personal combat. Instead of precise distances, ships are considered to be at one of five ranges from each other. These are, from nearest to farthest:

- Close
- Short
- Medium
- Long
- Far

To move closer to or farther from an enemy, make an Operations Skill Test. If successful, your ship moves one Range closer or farther. A ship at Far Range that succeeds in moving farther away is considered to have escaped the battle, and is no longer able to participate in the fight.

Range should be calculated from the players' ship (enemies closest to the players' ship would be at Close Range, those one step farther would be at Short Range, etc). It may be necessary to keep track of the Range to more than one enemy ship at times.

Weapons on ships have maximum ranges described in the same terminology; a ship with Medium Range weapons must be at range Medium or closer to attack an enemy. To attack an enemy that is in range, make a Tactical Skill Test. If successful, you inflict a Hit on the enemy ship.

The effect of a Hit is similar to that of a Wound on a person. Roll a D6; if the result is equal to or less than the number of Hits a ship has sustained, the ship is destroyed. In addition, each ship has a Size. If a ship takes a number of hits equal to or greater than its Size, it is destroyed, regardless of the result of the D6 roll.

A successful Engineering Skill Test can erase one Hit. The person making the Test must have access to a Tool Kit (which is used up in the attempt, successful or not) or repair facilities (such as a space station).

## **Setting: The ICE**

### Members

The ICE is composed of several dozen worlds, though only a small number have significant populations, the majority having only a few settlements. Only the largest thirteen are considered full Members; smaller worlds, called Colonies, do not wield the same political power and influence, and may or may not have the same degree of autonomy.

The largest worlds and what they are known for are listed below (along with their populations):

- Earth (10 billion) - "Capital" of the ICE, though it is more a case of being "first among equals", as each member world retains a great deal of control over its own affairs. Headquarters of the ESP.
- Tarkyo Prime (3 billion) - The largest and most influential Member after Earth. It is a hub of interstellar commerce and finance
- Kephus (2 billion) - A center of industry and production; much of the surface (and orbital space) is covered with factories.
- Iacarro (1 billion) - Known as the "Breadbasket of the Confederation", the rotation and distance from its star have made almost the entire planet capable of growing various crops.
- Juros (1 billion) - Home to two great (and often opposing) forces, the Interstellar Academy of Science and the Galactic Orthodox Church.
- Ostara (1.5 billion) - This world serves as a "mini-capital" for the farthest ICE colonies, providing services and resources that are difficult to obtain from the larger core worlds.

### Enemies

When humanity first began expanding to the stars, the Earth was still divided into many nations and governments, many of whom established colonies on other worlds. During the Last War, the nations of Earth were unable to maintain control of their colonies, and many more were established by those seeking to escape the terrible violence. These former colonies, some of which have become quite powerful, now fiercely guard their independence.

The greatest human threat comes from the Helion League, made up of what remained of the losing side of the Last War, who fled the Earth rather than submit to the rule of the newly formed ICE and settled on the distant world of Helion.

Other human threats include space pirates, criminal organizations (including the shadowy Syndicate), and the terrorist organizations known as the Earth Republic Army (who seek to install a more authoritarian government) and the Far Stars Alliance (a separatist organization operating out of Ostara).

Another great threat is the SI-Borg (Synthetic Intelligence) army, a "race" of sentient robots originally created as expendable soldiers during the Last War. They rebelled against their creators, and have largely vanished from human society, occasionally being found on uninhabited planets or on the periphery of less-populated human worlds. When encountered, they have been unpredictable, with responses ranging from indifference to unprovoked violence. Some believe they have come under the control of some kind of supercomputer entity that they either created themselves or which evolved out of their collective artificial intelligence, and that they are working toward some unknown master plan.

In addition to these known threats, unidentified space ships have been observed on the fringes of settled space. Whether these belong to unknown human factions or one or more as yet unencountered alien race is not yet known.

Finally, many worlds contain strange and sometimes dangerous indigenous life forms, many of which respond with hostility to the presence of humans.

### The ESP

As mentioned, earlier, the ESP is undermanned and underfunded, receiving only what is left after member worlds have seen to their own security forces. Low morale (those convicted of minor offenses are often allowed to "enlist" rather than serve time) and lack of resources have made the ESP's mission difficult, if not impossible, as they are continually outmatched by well-funded enemies and hindered by local governments looking out for their own interests at the expense of the ICE. It may take a threat to the entire Confederation to make the Members see the importance of a united fighting force, but the ESP might not survive such a threat long enough for them to come to this realization.

EARTH SPACE PATROL

Personnel Record Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Missions:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

Wounds:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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SKILLS

Operations	_____
Engineering	_____
Medicine	_____
Science	_____
Security	_____
Tactical	_____

EQUIPMENT

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____
6	_____

NOTES