

Merchant Class Ships

BOOK 2



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a part of FASA's Merchant Class Ships package; it is intended to provide general information on merchant ship operations and how they may be applied to *Traveller* adventures. For more detailed information on the individual merchant ships included in this package, see the other booklet included in the set.

Material provided in this book is designed to expand upon, but not replace, the information given in *Traveller* Book 2, *Starships*. That book remains the prime source of rules for all aspects of mercantile and starship operations. This booklet contains, for the most part, supplemental material which, when added, increases the completeness of those rules.

Some new items are presented on the pages that follow. They are included primarily to add extra detail to the operation of these ships, and to provide more possibilities for conducting adventures geared specifically for characters engaged in trade and other mercantile pursuits. Adventures and campaigns set against a mercantile background can have many advantages not least the fact that they will cover many different star systems, with an opportunity for great variety in backgrounds and options. At the same time, however, merchant adventures do have some serious pitfalls that must be avoided.

All too frequently, players will tend to fall into a pattern of buy low, sell high economics, which soon becomes totally mechanical. It is important for the referee to combat this tendency; originality and variety should be the keys to keeping these adventures from becoming stale. Some of the rules and suggestions presented in this booklet can be applied to accomplish this. The adventures that these ideas can give rise to will stand out in sharp contrast to the routines of a merchant life.

Rules on passengers and on cargo handling have been provided. These by themselves can point the way towards unusual situations or adventures. The section on Adventure Possibilities further points out many options that can and should be explored. Further development, however, has been left up to the referee. Since each group of players will have their own individual character, their own preferences and style of play, the referee will be best able to adapt these situations for maximum interest and enjoyment.

If further guidelines are desired, referees may wish to examine some of the adventure situations already developed for other ships similar to these. Scenarios have been provided in other FASA supplements and adventures; among those that may be especially useful as examples are three starship sets (Tethys, Leander, and Fenris), and Action Aboard, a collection of adventures set aboard a luxury liner.

CARGO

Traveller Book 2 delineates most standard practices and procedures which must be considered when transporting cargo between worlds. A separate section on Trade and Commerce further develops those aspects of cargo transport which are necessary for speculative trade ventures. A thorough knowledge of these *Traveller* rules is highly desirable for the

referee and players alike if the group is to be involved in adventures or campaigns in which the adventurers are owners and/or crew members of a merchant vessel engaged in cargo shipment.

When cargo becomes an important consideration, the referee is strongly encouraged to take a few extra steps in developing the nature of various lots of cargo which are to be shipped on board. This is already done, of course, for speculative trade. Ordinary lots transported for others, however, can also be worked out in the same kind of detail.

In addition to evoking a better picture (there is more flavor to a ship outbound from Regina with a cargo of electronics parts and computers than there is to another ship carrying thirty tons of cargo), knowledge of the type of cargo that is being carried aboard a merchant ship can have several interesting effects on the course of *Traveller* adventures. First of all, some cargos may pose specific problems in handling. A rare wine, for example, must be carefully handled at all times; high accelerations or zero gravity can each have deleterious effects on the wine's value. Thus a breakdown of inertial compensation systems or internal grav plates can render the wine temporarily unusable, and will perhaps lead to trouble with the recipients when the cargo is delivered. Another example of special handling might be the necessity for special equipment; perishable products will require refrigeration to prevent spoilage, and a failure of the ship's power plant could cause a great deal of trouble.

The composition of a ship's cargo can also become important when the ship must clear customs on a new world; some items may be subject to duties, while others can be severely restricted by law. Finally, there will be times when adventurers aboard a ship in trouble can divert the cargo to their own use. In all of these cases, it is important to know what the cargo is, and how much it is worth.

Ideally, each world will have its own unique set of imports and exports. A few minutes of work with the trade and speculation rules can establish what these will be. For each world that is visited, an export table can be developed by allowing any item with a 'purchase value' of 90% or less to be a common export. Anything determined to have a resale value of 110% or higher can be designated an import. All normal calculations for purchase and resale values should be followed, except that broker and character skills are not taken into account.

A table for exports and imports for each world can then be set up. Usually a 2 - 12 range will work best. Those items determined to have the best value on the world can be more common. One or two slots should be left open to represent unique products exported or imported by the world, products which are either not on the basic table, or which are in some way exceptional. For example, Zila in the Aramis subsector of the Spinward Marches has been noted to be famous for wine exports. Special entries on the table will reflect this fact.

When a ship takes on lots of cargo bound for a particular destination world, the referee should use these tables to determine what each lot contains. The export table for the planet where the cargo is taken on, or the import table for the destination world may be used. In the latter case, incongruities that result may be explained by remembering that the cargo may

likely reactions can be briefly described on paper, with the referee using this information to really bring a character to life. In so doing, interaction between player and non-player characters becomes even more complete and interesting. Referees who want examples of such full NPC development are encouraged to examine the series of *Casual Encounter* articles published in the *Journal of the Travellers Aid Society*, available from **Game Designers Workshop**.

Unfortunately, work put into extensive character development for a number of passengers can be come fairly involved, and should only be done when NPCs will be fairly important to the course of a particular adventure. Referees should, however, be careful to keep players from determining which characters are being more thoroughly developed; if they realize that certain characters have received more attention than others, they will concentrate their attentions on those well-prepared characters . . . possibly prematurely, ruining a planned surprise of some kind. It will sometimes be worthwhile for the referee to spend some extra effort working on one or two red herrings, characters who are as fully developed as any NPC the group meets, but are specifically used to distract the group's attention from the real threat or proper focus of attention. Other referees, those blessed with a quick mind and a ready tongue, may be able to improvise fast enough to develop a minor NPC on the spot, thus keeping players uncertain as to whom they should watch most closely.

Passenger Manifest: Passengers aboard a starship should be entered onto a passenger manifest filled out for each trip. A sample suitable for photocopying appears in the center of this booklet. Each passenger should be entered by name, UPP, occupation (if this is to be known to others), and an assignment to a particular stateroom on the ship. If players are themselves passengers, the referee should keep the record and assign staterooms as desired. This can be a useful way to keep a group of players together or apart (as needed). Changes in cabin assignments are usually handled by the Purser or Chief Steward. It will sometimes require a gratuity to arrange such changes.

When player characters are owners and/or crew of a passenger-carrying vessel, one of them should be made responsible for keeping the Passenger Manifest each trip. This character should be one of the ship's stewards, or an officer with steward or admin skill. When using characters generated by one of the expanded generation systems, liaison skill can be used as well.

Special attention should be given to passengers aboard a merchant ship. The referee will find in them an interesting means for involving players in new adventures; or at the least they will be useful in helping or hindering characters attempting to achieve some particular goal. Not every passenger, nor even every voyage, will give rise to a spontaneous adventure . . . but the potential will always be there, a useful way to divert player attention (possibly to buy the referee enough time to develop a new planet or situation), and a general source of added interest and enjoyment.

PASSENGER MANIFEST			
Ship:		Type:	
Captain:		High Passage Capacity:	
Date Prepared:		Middle Passage Capacity:	
Date Discharged:		Low Passage Capacity:	
Origin World:		Destination World:	
High and Middle Passengers			
Name/UPP	Occupation	Cabin No.	Notes
Total High Passengers, this trip:			
Total Middle Passengers, this trip:			
Total Low Passengers, this trip:			

SHIP'S PAPERS (COMMERCIAL)

1. Date of Preparation

2. Ship Name

3. Registration Number

4. Ship Type

5. Builder

6. Homeworld

7. Laid Down

8. First Flight

9. Cost (*new*)

10. Occupation

STATISTICS

Basic ship information for classification and registration purposes.

11a. Hull Tonnage

☐ Standard ☐ Custom

11b. Streamlined?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11c. Max Atmosphere

12. Acceleration

13. Jump

14. Power Plant

15. Cargo (*in tons*)

16. Staterooms

17. Low Berths

18. Full Crew

19. Minimal Crew

20. Ship's Vehicles (*describe*)21. Crew Manifest (*list names, UPPs, skills, salaries, and shares for all crew members*)22. Owner (*include full particulars on owner, whether present or not*)☐ Aboard ☐ Absent

23. Ship Name

SHIP'S COMPUTER

Data concerning the on-board computer and available programs.

24a. Computer Model

24b. CPU and Storage

24c. Mass

24d. Value

25. Computer Programs (*note those programs available*)

Routine	Space	Cr	Defensive	Space	Cr	Offensive	Space	Cr
<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver	1	0.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 1	1	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Predict 1	1	2.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 1	1	0.1	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 2	2	2.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Predict 2	2	4.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 2	2	0.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 3	3	3.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Predict 3	1	6.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 3	2	0.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 4	4	4.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Predict 4	3	8.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 4	2	0.5	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 5	2	5.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Predict 5	2	10.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 5	2	0.6	<input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver/evade 6	3	6.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Gunner Interact	1	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Jump 6	2	0.7	<input type="checkbox"/> Auto/evade	1	0.5	<input type="checkbox"/> Target	1	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Navigation	1	0.4	<input type="checkbox"/> Return Fire	1	0.5	<input type="checkbox"/> Selective 1	1	0.5
<input type="checkbox"/> Generate	2	0.8	<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-Missile	2	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Selective 2	2	0.8
<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-Hijack	1	0.1	<input type="checkbox"/> ECM	3	4.0	<input type="checkbox"/> Selective 3	1	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/> Library	1	0.3				<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-target 2	1	1.0
						<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-target 3	2	2.0
						<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-target 4	4	3.0
						<input type="checkbox"/> Launch	1	2.0
						<input type="checkbox"/> Double Fire	4	4.0

ADDITIONAL DATA

Information on armaments, inventories and services performed.

27. Turrets (*list turrets by hardpoint; indicate installed weaponry*)28. Ship's Locker (*inventory contents*)29. Annual Maintenance (*indicate date of last performance*)

CARGO MANIFEST		
Ship:	Type:	
Captain:		
Date Prepared:	Origin World:	
Date Discharged:	Destination World:	
Cargo	Location	Weight

ADVENTURE SITUATIONS

The guidelines below are intended as suggestions for adventures that might be run aboard any merchant ship. They are far from exhaustive; other ideas will undoubtedly present themselves to imaginative referees. These brief suggestions, however, can help to stimulate a variety of possibilities that can lead to anything from a minor encounter to a full-fledged, on-going campaign. Handling of the situation by the referee, and the reactions of the players, will help to shape the course each adventure follows.

Various broad categories of possible adventures are presented separately. Some may not be applicable at all times; for instance, some situations that work on vessels carrying passengers will not work on those ships that are exclusively devoted to cargo transport. Nonetheless, most of the ideas that are presented here can lead in one way or another to adventures that can be applied to almost any group of players in a wide variety of circumstances.

In each situation discussion, guidelines only are sketched out. Details can be filled in later by the referee. This allows the adaptation of the basic scenario idea to the widest possible range of background situations. For example, there is no need to limit player involvement to a particular set of conditions - most of these adventures can take place no matter what role player characters take. Some notes will point up the most useful roles for players, and discuss various matters that should be considered under certain circumstances, but, by and large, these situations can be applied in whatever form the referee desires.

HIJACKING

Passengers on board a merchant ship may attempt to seize it, for any of a number of reasons. Personal gain is one motive (that which will often appeal to player characters who launch such an attempt). A desire to make some political statement, or further a particular cause, may be another.

Adventures involving a hijacking can take a number of forms. Players taking the role of the ship's crew can be faced with the necessity of putting down the attempt, or at least holding on until aid arrives. If the players are to be the hijackers, they will be forced to plan and execute the attempt. In addition, however, the basic hijacking scenario allows such other adventures as an attempt to retake a hijacked ship or rescue hostages on board (either by a counter attack from within or by a raid mounted from outside); lastly, adventurers taking passage on board a ship may be caught in the middle as another group stages the attempt. In this case, players may be forced to make decisions that could lead to great danger or to great reward.

It should be remembered that anti-hijack precautions cannot be made totally infallible. Passengers cannot be too strictly policed (or the ship will soon be losing business), nor can any merchant ship really afford to operate and ignore passengers if the ship is fitted out to carry them. This means that the hijacking situation is always viable, no matter what precautions may be taken. No matter how the characters become involved in the situation, all

of these possibilities should be kept in mind by the referee; a single hijacking attempt might well involve more than one of the options discussed above, stretching the single incident into several different sessions of play as required.

VIP

Important individuals - nobles, trading magnates, executives, and other figures of importance - often take passage aboard merchant liners and other passenger-carrying ships. When they do so, they open up a variety of options for *Traveller* adventure.

Bodyguard: A party may be retained as part of a VIP's retinue. In taking such a job, the group will be faced with such needs as protecting their patron from assassination or kidnapping attempts, or otherwise serving his interests. Many adventures can arise from this routine situation.

Terrorism: Characters may themselves decide to perpetrate some act of violence against a travelling VIP. They might be hired to do so, or they may be acting on their own. The latter case might arise out of a desire to get revenge for some past episode in an ongoing campaign.

Murder: One interesting and unusual adventure possibility is to involve players in a murder mystery. A ship in jump space is completely cut off; a crime committed on board will have a narrow range of possible suspects. Amateur detectives might find great enjoyment in unwrapping this kind of complicated mystery. It can become particularly intricate if the players themselves are under suspicion; a cagey referee might even choose to develop a special adventure revolving around a murder which actually was committed by a player character. In this situation, players might be energetically tracking down clues, never realizing that one of their number is himself trying to obscure the trail as they do so. Devotees of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers will find this an entertaining break from the usual routine of *Traveller*.

BOMB ON BOARD

The presence of a bomb on board a merchant ship - planted by terrorists attempting to kill a VIP or by unscrupulous owners seeking to collect insurance on a ship, for example - can lead to a tense and exciting incident. Disarmament of a bomb by a player or group of players should be made the main focus of interest, though the search for bombs could also be important.

The situation can be made particularly exciting by some careful referee preparation. If possible, the referee should carefully diagram the bomb's mechanism, identifying various wires and components. When all is prepared, the adventure should be run 'against the clock' using a stopwatch to convey the sense of an approaching deadline. The stopwatch can be halted any time a point of rules or background needs to be clarified, thus preserving the real-time urgency without having game mechanics disrupt the situation too much.

As the attempt at disarmament takes place, the referee should have a clear idea of each crucial player decision required for disarming the bomb.

At each of these points, the player should be required to choose; however, saving throws against the character's intelligence should be allowed to reflect the difference between a player and the character in the game. Die modifiers can be applied for demolitions experience or skill; other modifiers that might influence the course of the attempt might include JOT, mechanical, or electronics skills.

Tension - through the time factor and the constant chance the wrong choice can prove fatal - should be built up as much as possible during the course of the incident. A well-run bomb scenario could consume a large portion of a single session.

PIRACY

Whether players are a ship's crew, passengers, or are themselves engaged in piracy, this can be an action-packed situation. Pirates must capture ships and cargos intact; thus space combat is greatly hampered if they are to make any profit from the venture. Surprise and sneak attacks will often be the best course in launching such an attack.

A variant of piracy could revolve around privateering. Privateers are 'legal' pirates, preying upon the commerce on an enemy during time of war. Merchant class ships can, of course, be the victims of such attacks; they may also make excellent 'Q-ships', decoys fitted out with extra crews and weapons to make an effective privateer or privateer-hunter. Modifications will include taking on much larger crews, both to help the ship in combat, and to man captured prizes; extra weapons may be mounted (up to *Traveller* limits), or heavily armed small craft could be hidden cargo bays of sufficient capacity. For the most part, this is a good adventure for characters acting as the privateer crew. Sometimes, though, a seemingly harmless merchantman can turn out to be a decoy, causing great problems for characters going about their lawful (or unlawful) business.

BLOCKADE RUNNER

As the Fifth Frontier War rages in the Spinward Marches, profits possible to daring merchants go up astronomically . . . along with risks. Planets still holding out **behind enemy lines** can be lucrative destinations, whether the ship carries speculative goods or a cargo arranged with government or military representatives. Nor is there a lack of passengers - many willing to pay far more than usual to escape their planet.

Against these chances of great profit must be set the hazards of war. Every trip into enemy-controlled space involves a chance (determined by the referee) of an encounter with hostile ships, squadrons, or fleets. Actions involving *High Guard* naval combat or small boarding actions can both result, along with numerous other potential adventures arising from the backdrop of the war.

LOST SHIP

Every now and then, misjumps occur during interstellar travel. A misjump can lead to an interesting situation for the passengers or crew of a merchant ship. If a planet is at hand (if there isn't one, the group is likely to be lost forever), adventures revolving around the need to replenish supplies, discover the ship's whereabouts, and generally face the unknown can provide an interesting alternative to the ordinary run of mercantile adventures.

SHIPBOARD ENCOUNTERS

The passengers and crew of a merchant ship can be the source of many unusual adventure situations that arise out of the interactions between various personalities. Such encounters can range from chance meetings to major clashes, and can even become springboards for further campaigns.

TRADE PIONEERING

Almost any ship (but particularly the SEEKER class armored merchantman in this set) can work well in the role of a trade pioneering vessel. Ships of this type range along the periphery of civilized space, searching for new markets and new resources.

Trade pioneering adventures combine aspects of many popular science fiction themes. In these adventures it is possible to explore alien worlds, contact new cultures and new races, and generally experience a true frontier life far from the confines of civilization. Adventurers on expeditions of this kind will be forced to rely heavily on their own resources and skills. Almost any kind of adventure can plausibly be injected into a trade pioneering situation, and characters of all kinds - from scientists to mercenaries - can be employed with equal ease.

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