

Space Force



Science Fiction RPG

Actor's Guide

Chris Gonnerman

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Table of Contents

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 | Skill Selection..... | 15 |
| It's All For (The) Show..... | 1 | Fill In The Blanks..... | 15 |
| This is Old School..... | 1 | Starting Equipment..... | 15 |
| A Note About Gender..... | 2 | Skills..... | 16 |
| About Seventh Realm..... | 2 | Ability and Skill Rolls..... | 16 |
| History – What Everyone Knows..... | 3 | Automatic Failure..... | 16 |
| Signals from Mars..... | 3 | Doubles, Triples, and So On..... | 17 |
| Vulcan's Forge..... | 3 | Taking your Time..... | 17 |
| Space Colonies..... | 4 | Automatic Success..... | 17 |
| Current Registry of Scoutships..... | 3 | Non-Proficiency..... | 17 |
| Interstellar Exploration..... | 4 | Skill Descriptions..... | 17 |
| Actor's Introduction..... | 5 | Advancement..... | 21 |
| Guide to Ship Operations..... | 6 | Subplots..... | 21 |
| The Ship..... | 6 | Combat..... | 23 |
| Takeoff and Landing..... | 7 | Time and Scale..... | 23 |
| Space Force Ranks..... | 8 | Surprise..... | 23 |
| The Multiscope..... | 8 | Initiative..... | 23 |
| Ship's Library..... | 9 | Actions Allowed In A Round..... | 23 |
| The Navigational Computer..... | 9 | Attack Rolls..... | 24 |
| Jump Procedures..... | 10 | Off Hand Penalty..... | 24 |
| Probe Rockets..... | 11 | Ranged Weapons..... | 24 |
| Ship to Ship Weapons..... | 11 | Fighting with Two Weapons..... | 24 |
| Tethering Procedures..... | 11 | Grenade-Like Missiles..... | 25 |
| Character Generation..... | 13 | Damage..... | 25 |
| Central Casting..... | 13 | Normal Healing..... | 26 |
| About Character Choice..... | 14 | Rest..... | 26 |
| Ability Scores..... | 14 | | |

Introduction

The Space Force Science Fiction RPG is a retro-scifi role-playing game set in an alternate 1969. Players take on the roles of members of the Solar Alliance Space Force, exploring other stars aboard a small scoutship with a crew of five to eight. History took an odd turn in this alternate reality, with nuclear-powered spacecraft racing to Mars to loot the remains of the advanced civilization that once thrived there.

For players accustomed to modern science fiction, some aspects of this game may be hard to comprehend. The droids you are looking for are not here. There are no "sensor arrays," just instruments, some of them remotely operated, some handled by the scientist directly. Testing an atmosphere requires test tubes, not a tricorder. The only "computer" aboard a Space Force ship is the navigation computer; it is little more than a fancy calculator with a whopping 64k bytes of RAM. Anything done aboard a Space Force ship is done by a crew member, and *nothing is automatic*. (On the plus side, alien computer viruses won't get very far.)

It's All For (The) Show

Most modern role-playing games are designed around the "literary" model of storytelling. Adventures are often likened to chapters in the book that is the campaign. Other games have a more "cinematic" model, where each adventure is sort of like a movie.

Space Force isn't like that. *Space Force* is a TV show. Each adventure is an episode, or

maybe two or even three if the adventure is a big one. As with the cinematic model, untidy details get swept under the rug. For example, players shouldn't try to detail each and every item of the ship's equipment, especially at first; the Game Master (called the **Director** henceforth) will rule on whether or not any particular item requested by a player (generally called an **actor** in these rules) is aboard or not. It's more important to have a fun adventure than to get every little detail right.

This is Old School

Space Force is a true old-school game. This means that the usual rules from the early days apply, including our version of the standard Rule Zero:

The Director is always right.

It is the job of the Director to create an entertaining game, as mentioned above. This doesn't mean giving the players everything they ask for... overcoming adverse situations is a big part of what makes a role-playing game fun. But challenges should be reasonable... it should always be possible for the players to "win" in the sense of getting their characters home alive, completing their mission with some kind of success, and so on.

This also means that Space Force can be a deadly game for player characters. It should usually be less deadly than other old-school games, mainly because the style of play is different, but the chance of losing a player character should always be present. Without risk, there is no excitement.

Players are reminded that the rules in this book are just **guidelines**, intended to provide a "common ground" on which to build a game. The Director may change any of it at his or her discretion, and may likewise make any rulings during play that he or she deems reasonable (or entertaining).

A Note About Gender

Space Force as a game is intended to be playable by players of any gender, portraying characters of any gender, and most of this book is written in as inclusive a way as possible in order to reflect that.

On the other hand, however, part of this book is presented in the form of a manual written by the fictional Solar Alliance Space Force (i.e. the military) of the pseudo-1969 Earth presented in this game. That part is written in the fashion of military manuals of the era, inasmuch as the author can mimic that style, and such manuals would and did use the male pronoun exclusively. This is in no way meant to limit the playing opportunities for players or characters who are female; rather, it presents, in a crude artistic form, the role-playing challenges of the setting. One of the key features of playing an RPG in a historical or pseudo-historical setting is dealing with just this sort of challenge.

The Director should, in the interest of producing a good show, try to avoid making these challenges too significant, especially if just one or two players are affected (and thus

singled out). The Producer believes that would just not be good TV. But of course, the Director should always feel free to run whatever sort of show the cast members find entertaining.

About Seventh Realm

Space Force is a **Seventh Realm** game. I don't consider Seventh Realm to be a "universal RPG" because I categorically deny that such a game can really exist... the style and feel of a given campaign world is molded, in a large degree, by the rules in use in the game, and a "universal" system can't truly adapt to the differing styles of all possible campaign worlds. A rule system suitable for "cinematic" style games will work poorly in "gritty, realistic" games, for example.

Seventh Realm is less a game system, and more a toolbox of RPG parts from which I build games. It's designed to work with pulp-style campaign worlds, ranging in style from the worlds of Burroughs and Howard to semi-realistic "noir" campaigns, or even realms of modern sci fi.

Always remember, these rules are guidelines. The Game Master is the final arbiter of what is allowed in his or her campaign. Sure, I created Space Force, and wrote my vision down here. It doesn't mean you have to have things just as I wrote them to be "right." These rules aren't the ending, they're the beginning. See where they take you.

History – What Everyone Knows

The material in this section is intended for both players and Directors. Material intended for the Director's eyes only appears in a later section (near the back of this book).

Signals from Mars

World War II was nearing its end when the signals were first detected... the Germans had already surrendered, and the US was building the bombs that would herald the end of the war in the Pacific. At first it was believed the radio signals were terrestrial in nature, but scientists soon confirmed that the signals were actually coming from Mars.

The space race was on! The United States and the Soviet Union both started their space programs right away, but the US had the advantage of technical expertise with atomic power. Oppenheimer worked side-by-side with Von Braun, and soon unmanned atomic rockets launched from the US were in orbit around the Earth and her Moon.

Truly automatic systems were years away yet, so it was obvious that the first mission to Mars would be manned. A massive ship called the USS Columbus was launched with a crew of twenty-two, its powerful nuclear ramjets driving it down the runway; once in the upper atmosphere, the ship switched to a nuclear thermal drive system. In later years the nuclear ramjet was outlawed, the radiation released being too harmful; at the time, it was the only technology the Americans had that could get the heavy craft into space, and in those early days the dangers of radiation were still not well understood.

Vulcan's Forge

What the crew of the USS Columbus found on Mars was scattered, eroded evidence of an advanced civilization gone for at least a hundred thousand years. Without the radio signals to follow, they might never have found the underground bunker system which they codenamed "Vulcan's Forge."

Within the Forge the explorers found living quarters, workshops, and a hangar containing a few small conical spacecraft. The facility showed evidence that the unknown, apparently humanoid inhabitants had left in an orderly fashion, abandoning unneeded and nonfunctional items as they did. The items left behind were mysterious in the extreme, but with the Soviet mission believed to be just a few months behind them, the American explorers worked feverishly to understand what they had found.

A junior member of the science team discovered a classroom with the Martian version of the Periodic Table of the Elements on the wall. Though it differed in some details from the familiar version understood by Earthly science, it served as a Rosetta stone, permitting the scientists to decode the alien system of numbers and some of their writing.

Amazingly, considering the extreme age of the machines, one of the spacecraft was still marginally operational. It was from that ship, and several other non-working models found in the hangar, that the Americans discovered the

secret of the argon plasma drive (a superior, less polluting reaction drive system). Other technologies were acquired in time; some of the ancient devices could be reproduced, but not yet understood. The most important of these was the device dubbed a "graviton accelerator" which permitted interstellar travel.

The graviton accelerator system made it possible to create wormholes. A spaceship could create such a wormhole in front of it, then slip inside and exit (after a journey through a starless space within the wormhole) many light years away. It was this technology that would permit humanity to travel to the stars.

Space Colonies

The Solar Alliance maintains three off-Earth stations:

Wright Station is a large ring-shaped space station orbiting Earth in geostationary position over the Atlantic ocean. This station is a regular stopping-off point, as both spaceplanes from Earth and nuclear or plasma-powered orbital transports from the Moon or Mars can dock there. Wright Station includes a significant "hotel" facility, though it is always about 90% occupied by Solar Alliance personnel such as members of the Space Force as well as scientists and technicians bound for the Moon or Mars.

Yeager Station is a smaller, newer space station orbiting closer to Earth. It is a military base, used entirely for Space Force operations. Yeager Station has gravity plating for the comfort of personnel on board.

Tranquility Base is the Space Force shipyard on the Moon. Both interplanetary ships and starships are engineered, built, tested, and repaired at Tranquility. The base has recently been outfitted with gravity plating, granting a comfortable Earth-normal weight to personnel and equipment.

Interstellar Exploration

By the time the Soviet Union acquired a significant presence on Mars, the United States had already begun to build the first wave of interstellar scoutships, the Scorpius class.

It was one such ship, the USS Icarus, which first encountered an alien spacecraft while exploring an unnamed G0V star in the constellation of Orion. The alien ship attacked immediately; the desperate crew of the unarmed and damaged Icarus loaded conventional explosives onto a Bluebird probe rocket with which they attacked the alien ship, inflicting minor damage. The aliens fled by wormhole in the direction of the constellation of Taurus, prompting Earthly authorities to refer to them as "Taurans." Their actual home star is as yet unknown.

As soon as its wormhole drive could be made operational again, the Icarus returned to Earth. President Kennedy presented photographs of the alien craft along with mission details and crew testimony to the United Nations in late November 1963, which soon led to the UN's transformation into the Solar Alliance. Control of much of the US space service was eventually transferred to the Solar Alliance, becoming known as the Solar Alliance Space Force, or just the "Space Force" for short.

Actor's Introduction

The year is 1969, and you are a member of the crew of a Solar Alliance scoutship exploring space in the interests of the people of Earth. Many questions are unanswered... where did the Tauran spacecraft originate? Are there more of them? Do they, in fact, threaten the Earth?

At present, the only extraplanetary colonies held by Earth are on Mars and in orbit around Earth and Earth's moon. While your missions are officially peaceful, many on Earth believe a war against alien forces is inevitable. Thus, your

ship is equipped with tactical nuclear missiles, while you yourselves have Vulcan pistols, energy guns based on designs found on Mars.

The following section of this book is a reproduction of the **Solar Alliance Space Force Guide to Ship Operations**, a briefing manual provided to civilians (generally scientists) who have been chosen to travel aboard interstellar scoutships. The Guide will, hopefully, help you as an actor to prepare for your role in the show. As you read it, try to imagine yourself as your character, preparing for your first mission in deep space.

Guide to Ship Operations

The materials in this manual are intended for civilians traveling aboard Space Force starships, such as scientists, technical specialists, and so on. Reading this guidebook will prepare you for common situations aboard ship. This guide also answers common questions often asked by new interstellar travelers.

The Ship

Below is a deck plan showing most of the accessible spaces aboard a Scorpius-class ship. If you will be assigned to a Nova-class ship, you will find an appropriate deck plan on the next page.

Scorpius and Nova class ships, and all but the very oldest Space Force ships in general, have gravity plating in the floor providing artificial gravity. Space Force ships generally provide a crew deck on "top" and place all of the actual machinery of the ship beneath and behind the crew area.

As you have been selected for service in space, you should already be familiar with gravity plating safety regulations; however, in the interest of completeness we will repeat the standard warnings here. *Watch for the orange and black chevron markings that indicate changing or shifting gravity fields.* Such markings are usually found in airlocks and around the instrument bay hatch (as explained below). A supply of gravity warning tape is included in the Engine Room, for use by the Chief Engineer in the event that he has to remove or deactivate any areas of gravity plating during maintenance or repair activities.

Nova-class ships are the smallest human-built craft that can carry a working graviton accelerator. The small two-seat Martian ships you have heard of are shorter than the Nova-class ships, and have much smaller crew areas (just large enough for a pilot and one passenger) as they were apparently built for speed.

The station behind the pilot (on the port side of the bridge) provides both weapons control and control of the remote instruments; not surprising, as it was originally intended as the probe control station. The hatch just aft of that station provides physical access to the equipment/weapons bay, which is *upside down* relative to the rest of the ship since it is beneath the gravity plating. Moving smoothly through the shifting gravity field around the hatch requires much practice; those who fail to do so in a neat and orderly fashion are often subject to some good-natured ribbing by the more senior crew. If you will be performing scientific operations while on board, you will likely spend a lot of time in this area; please note that in space, tidiness is very important, so stow and secure all tools, instruments, and materials in the provided storage lockers when not in use. This warning applies to other locations aboard ship, of course, but is especially important in the equipment bay.

All seats are bolted down, have locking swivels, and are equipped as acceleration couches. The beds in the crew quarters are two-tier bunkbeds, which can be folded flat against the wall if the space is needed for other purposes.

All the items in the ship's stores are secured with nets or cables to prevent shifting of the load. In addition, gravity plating in the bulkheads acts to counterbalance acceleration forces using a simple feedback loop connected to an inertial sensor near the engine.

The reactor is a compact fission unit which provides power for the plasma drive; it extends through the deck and into the mechanical area below. In the case of damage to the reactor which might result in a meltdown or release of radiation, the engineer can eject the core of the reactor into space by means of a lever in the engine room. Pulling the lever withdraws bolts securing the reactor core while simultaneously introducing a spray of water into the top of the containment vessel; the water flashes into steam on contact with the hot core and forcibly ejects the core into space.

Also found in the mechanical area below the floor are the liquid argon fuel tanks, along with the graviton accelerator (which runs from the reactor to the nose of the ship, and is accessible by removing floor plates in the central walkway). If necessary, the plasma drive can be refueled with other fusible gases

such as hydrogen, but argon is preferred as the plasma igniter is adjusted specifically for it. Argon is also preferred due to the fact that hydrogen may leak and can present a significant fire risk.

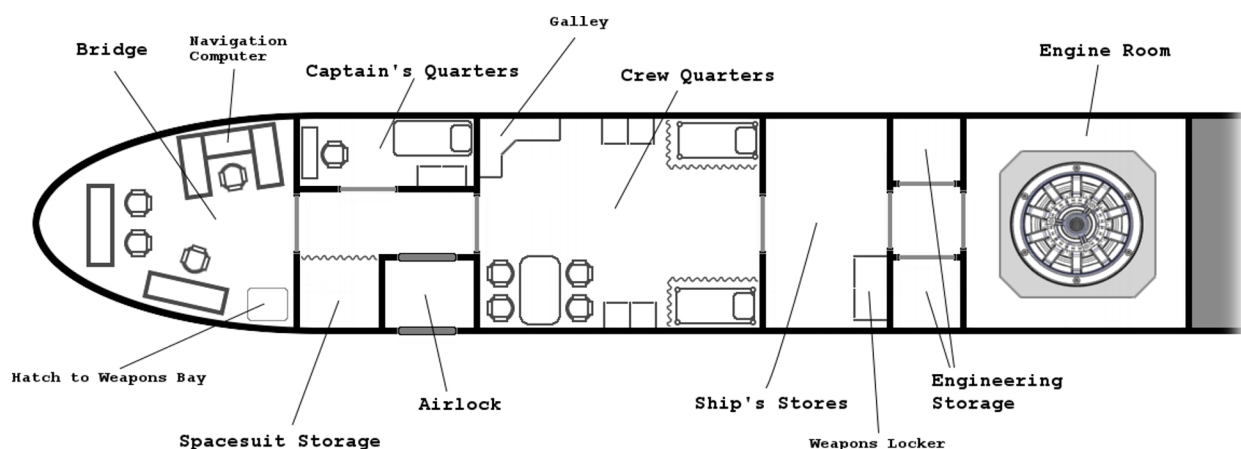
As a matter of standard procedure, any Space Force ship leaves on a mission with air, water, and rations for about three times as long as the mission plan requires.

It's important to understand that a ship in interstellar space is beyond communication. If the Martians had some form of faster-than-light communication, we haven't puzzled it out yet... the only way to "phone home" is to go home, or to launch a Bluebird probe rocket through a wormhole, though this latter method only works within a one-jump range of Sol.

Takeoff and Landing

Scorpius-class and Nova-class ships can take off from a runway like an airplane, and generally this is the recommended method, as it's the easiest. Landing on a runway is equally simple.

Figure 2: Nova-Class Ship Deck Plan



Where a runway is not available, a Nova-class ship can land in a fashion similar to a bird; it fires retro-rockets to slow down, at the same time lifting the nose by means of the powerful lateral ventral forward (LVF) maneuvering thrusters. Those particular thrusters are more powerful than the other maneuvering thrusters for precisely this purpose. At the same time, the pilot depresses the main engine nozzle to its lowest angle, providing lift at the rear, and the ship settles onto its aft landing gear first, then the pilot cuts the main engine and lowers the nose gently to the ground. This is called a VSTOL (very short takeoff or landing) maneuver; as indicated by the name, takeoffs can be performed in the same way quite easily.

Nova-class ships can perform VSTOL maneuvers at gravity levels up to about $1\frac{1}{4}$ G; however, Scorpius-class ships can only operate in this way in very low gravity situations ($1/3$ G or less) as they were not designed for the stresses of VSTOL.

One difficulty with VSTOL is that the pilot cannot see the landing area through any of the ports as he performs it. Nova-class ships are therefore equipped with downward-facing video cameras relayed by closed circuit to the bridge. Landing using a CRT instead of direct observation is still somewhat challenging. Scorpius-class ships are being refitted with landing cameras during scheduled refit cycles.

The Multiscope

The multiscope is a conventional optical telescope with spectroscope, film camera (for stills) and video camera (for remote viewing, i.e. on the Bridge). The multiscope is built to work in space, and has its own little airlock in

Space Force Ranks

The Solar Alliance Space Force, though officially multinational, was initially formed by a collaboration of the US Army Air Corps and the US Navy. One result of this combination is the unusual rank system used within the Space Force: Officers have Navy-style ranks, while enlisted personnel have Army-style ranks.

Enlisted ranks are as follows, from least to greatest:

Private (Pvt)

Private First Class (PFC)

Addressed as Private

Corporal (Cpl)

Sergeant (Sgt)

Staff Sergeant (SSgt)

Addressed as Sergeant

Master Sergeant (MSgt)

Officer ranks are as follows, from least to greatest:

Ensign (Ens)

Lieutenant (junior grade) (LtJG)

Addressed as Lieutenant

Lieutenant (Lt)

Lieutenant Commander (LtCmdr)

Addressed as Commander

Commander (Cmdr)

Captain (Capt)

Rear Admiral (RAdm)

Addressed as Admiral

Vice Admiral (VAdm)

Addressed as Admiral

Admiral (Adm)

the ceiling of the equipment bay so it can be pulled in when not in use. Note that the multiscope must be brought inside to change the film in the camera.

Facilities for developing film are provided in the equipment bay, of course, though in some cases mission parameters will require returning exposed film to Earth in the undeveloped state.

Ship's Library

Every starship carries a set of books useful to the Captain and crew. The books are generally kept on the Bridge, in a cabinet near the navigation computer. These books are replaced with updated copies at the start of almost every mission. Books found aboard Space Force starships are as follows:

The Interstellar Mission Guidebook: This book contains all details (up to SECRET classification) of every extra-Solar mission undertaken since the inception of the Space Force. The Guidebook is organized in chronological order by mission launch date, with an index of ships and another index of star systems.

The Stellar Survey Guidebook: This book details all that is known about every star within 60 light years of Sol. Each star is described in as much or as little detail as is available; thus, frequently-visited stars will have more information than stars that have been visited only once, and stars not yet visited will be listed only by their stellar type code and Sol-relative location. Details given include ships which have visited and the dates of those visits, allowing for cross-referencing with the Mission Guidebook above.

The Space Force Ship Registry: This book details each ship in the service. Capabilities, current Captain and crew, and an abbreviated mission timeline are provided (the Mission Guidebook above should be consulted for detailed mission information).

The Ship's Manual: This volume provides the Captain and crew with details of ship operations. It is not a repair manual, but rather an operational guide; the Chief Engineer has a full set of repair manuals for all ship's systems in a secure cabinet in the Engine Room.

The Stellar Navigation Manual: This book details the mathematics involved in navigating through the stars, and includes all necessary charts and tables for verifying the ship's location. The ship's navigator (or pilots, if the navigator is incapacitated) can confirm the ship's location and orientation using the multiscope and this book alone, though it is much faster to feed the multiscope fixes into the navigational computer (as explained below). Procedures for using the NAVFIX program described in the next section are also included in this manual.

The Navigational Computer

Space Force ships are equipped with state-of-the-art computer systems, outfitted with 64 kilobytes of RAM and a compact yet efficient CPU operating at a million cycles per second. These computers are amazingly compact, smaller than any current commercially-available computer system having the same specifications.

The navigation computer aboard your ship will be equipped with two standard programs: NAVFIX and MPLOT.

NAVFIX accepts angular fixes for standard guide stars, as described in the Stellar Navigation Manual, and provides the corrections needed to realign the ship's gyrocompass after a jump.

MPLOT accesses an extensive database of stars within 60 light years of Sol. It can calculate angular orientation (i.e. the correct heading to travel to a given star), as well as the jump distance and estimated travel time. The latest MPLOT versions can even accumulate an itinerary of up to ten stellar destinations!

Additional programs may be provided in support of specific missions.

Jump Procedures

The first step in jumping to another star is to calculate heading, distance, and time. This may be done manually via the Stellar Navigation Manual, or using the navigation computer's MPLOT program.

The pilot (either the Captain or First Officer) does the following:

1. Orients the ship according to the calculated heading.
2. Orders the Engineer to charge the graviton accelerator for a jump of the given distance (for which purpose the Engineer has a chart).
3. Sets the jump clock to the estimated transit time.
4. When informed by the Engineer that the graviton accelerator is ready, the pilot presses the red button labeled INITIATE JUMP on the helm console.

5. The wormhole should form immediately. It will appear for only a few seconds, so the pilot must quickly engage maneuvering thrusters to push the ship into the wormhole.
6. As soon as the ship is fully inside the wormhole, all thrusters should be disengaged.

The small pocket of spacetime in which a ship is located after entering a wormhole is commonly called "nullspace," though scientists assert this is a misnomer. Normal space is sometimes called "realspace" to differentiate it from nullspace.

Nullspace is initially quite dark. At some point near the end of a jump (typically when the jump clock has somewhere between 10 and 50 minutes remaining), a point of light will appear. This is called the "far end" of the wormhole. Nullspace becomes faintly illuminated at this point, turning a deep blue color. In the last moments before the ship returns to realspace the far end will seem to rush toward the ship and explode. Do not be alarmed, as this is normal and expected behavior.

Upon arrival in realspace, the ship will generally be tumbling. The pilot must correct this tumbling manually using maneuvering thrusters. As soon as the ship is stabilized, the navigator should take stellar fixes using the multiscope and then either feed them to the navigation computer's NAVFIX program or use the Stellar Navigation Manual to get the necessary corrective figures for the gyrocompass. This should be done as soon as possible in case it is necessary to jump again; jumping without a corrected gyrocompass could easily lead to disaster.

Probe Rockets

Besides the multiscope and the advanced radio rig, the equipment bay carries four reusable "**Bluebird**" probe rockets. A Bluebird probe can be remotely piloted and normally carries one of the following scientific payloads:

The **Atmosphere Payload** is used to collect an atmospheric sample; the Bluebird is launched on a trajectory that carries it into and back out of a planet's atmosphere, and on its return the air sample can be analyzed using the compact chemical laboratory stored in the equipment bay. The payload is reusable, but a lengthy cleaning process is needed before putting one back into service. Ships normally carry two of these.

The **Telemetry Payload** contains a radio receiver and transmitter; the latter may be set to transmit a ping every 3 seconds, or to relaying received signals. The ping timing allows very accurate relative velocity calculations in open space. Ships normally carry two of these.

The **Video Payload** contains a video camera with audio capabilities. Nova-class ships have a modern, commercial-grade videotape system, and can record and replay video from one of these payloads; thus, Nova-class ships are outfitted with two of these payloads. Scorpis-class ships are being refitted with videotape systems during regular maintenance cycles, and those which have been so refitted will normally carry two video payloads.

Ship to Ship Weapons

All Space Force scoutships are equipped with four Centurion missiles. These missiles look very similar to the Bluebird probe rockets, but this is just to permit them to be loaded into the same launch tube. Centurion missiles carry small tactical nuclear warheads, and do not need to score a direct hit on an enemy ship to damage it. The operating capabilities and features of these missiles are classified TOP SECRET, and thus cannot be discussed further in this book.

Tethering Procedures

Each Space Force spacesuit has an integrated carabiner on the belt to which a tether may be connected. At each end of a standard fifty yard tether is a clip. Just behind the clip at each end is an aluminum ball, which allows the end of the tether to be thrown as well as acting as a stop if the belt carabiner is clipped to the tether instead of to the tether clip. For example, a spaceman might clip one end of a tether to his own spaceship, and then having crossed to a satellite, might clip the other end there. With his belt carabiner clipped to the tether itself, he can travel back and forth between ship and satellite in safety. Even if one end or the other of the tether should become unhooked, it won't slip out of the belt carabiner because of the ball stop.

Inside the airlock of any Space Force ship is a cabinet full of carefully packed tethers, and an electric winch into which a tether may be linked. The clip and ball assembly slips into a slot in the side of the winch pulley, out of the way of the tether as it's being drawn in. The winch has a folding handle for manual use in case of electrical failure, and the entire side of

the pulley can be quickly dismounted to permit removal of a tether without unwinding it (so that multiple tethers can be drawn in quickly).

The outer 3 feet of a standard Space Force airlock has no gravity plating, so gravity falls off quickly in that area. There are several tethering loops arranged on either side of the airlock hatch inside, and on the outside near the "open" side of the airlock (usually the aft edge).

Character Generation

Central Casting

When generating characters for a fantasy RPG, everyone knows it's important not to go out without a couple of fighters, a healer, a thief, and so on. However, fitting in an extra healer or wizard is usually not such a big deal. But when you are creating a character for Space Force, you should talk to the Director and to your other cast members; if you are all generating characters at the same time, you need to come to some agreements on who plays what before you begin. You can't just slip in an extra Chief Engineer, especially if you will be staffing a Nova-class ship.

The Director will generally assign you the smaller Nova-class if there are five or fewer players, filling out any shortfalls with NPCs, while a larger group of players will require a bigger Scorpis-class ship. The game is actually written with the assumption that most games will involve the crew of the Nova-class starship Pegasus, but the Director may choose whatever ship suits his or her preferences.

The standard crew positions aboard a scoutship are as follows:

Captain: The person in charge. The "Captain" aboard a scoutship will generally be a Lieutenant Commander or a full Commander, especially if this is his or her first command. While aboard his or her own ship, you always address the Captain as Captain, regardless of the ranks of either character. The Captain must be a skilled **spacecraft pilot** (level 4 at least) and **astrogator** (level 3 minimum). As a Space Force officer, the Captain will also be

expected to have a level of at least 1 in **shooting**.

First Officer: Also called the Exec, or sometimes Number One by the Captain, this person is second in command and assumes the Captain's position if he or she is killed or incapacitated. A First Officer will usually be a Lieutenant or a Lieutenant Commander, and is always junior in rank to the Captain (if both are Lieutenant Commanders, the Captain must be more senior in terms of time in service). The requirements of this position are exactly the same as for the Captain: level 4 or better **spacecraft pilot**, level 3 or better **astrogator**. As a Space Force officer, the First Officer will also be expected to have a level of at least 1 in **shooting**.

Chief Engineer: The person who operates the engines and keeps the ship's systems in working order. A Chief Engineer will generally be a Lieutenant; aboard a Nova-class ship, he or she might be a Lieutenant, Junior Grade. The Chief Engineer must have level 4 or better in **spacecraft engineering**. As a Space Force officer, the Engineer will also be expected to have a level of at least 1 in **shooting**.

Ship's Doctor: The person who is responsible for the health of all aboard the ship. The Ship's Doctor may be anything from Lieutenant, Junior Grade all the way to a Lieutenant Commander, but will never outrank the Captain (i.e. a doctor who outranks a ship's captain will not be assigned to that ship by the Space Force). On a mission, the ship's doctor often assists the scientist when not otherwise engaged. This character must have **medical**

skill of level 5 or higher. Unlike other Space Force officers, the ship's doctor will not be expected to have **shooting** skill, though of course the player may choose to assign it anyway.

Scientist: The person who does the actual scientific investigation; i.e. the reason for the whole mission. The Scientist is a civilian, always, and thus not part of the chain of command. In practice, this means the Scientist does not have to follow normal military protocol, forms of address, etc. (he or she may call the Captain by his or her first name, for example, with or without permission), but must still obey the lawful commands of the Captain and First Officer. The Scientist must have one specialty at level 4 or higher, but which exact specialty depends on the type of mission undertaken; a player who wants to fly as Scientist aboard a number of missions should create a character with several specialties. However, depending on the Director's story plans, it is still possible that the Scientist character may be different from one mission to the next.

About Character Choice

In any military organization, the individual member does not usually choose his or her assignments; rather, superior officers assign individuals according to whatever criteria they deem reasonable.

In this game, however, the players should get to choose. If the player of the Chief Engineer decides to play a Scientist, and another player creates a new Chief Engineer, the Director should not say that these changes are not allowed by the superior officers... rather, the players may simply state that their characters

were assigned by those officers. This is one of the few times when players may officially speak for NPCs. However, remember that the Director may specify whatever requirements he or she wishes for the characters on a given mission, especially for the Scientist, and the players must abide by this ruling.

Ability Scores

Ability Scores are numbers which indicate or measure each character's raw capabilities in several areas. In this game they are small numbers, typically ranging from 1 to as much as 7. There are six ability scores, as follows:

Strength, a measure of the character's raw physical power.

Dexterity, the character's ability to perform skillful manipulation. Feats of agility also use this statistic, for the sake of simplicity.

Endurance, which indicates how tough and resilient the character is physically.

Intelligence, the ability to learn, remember, and apply knowledge.

Will, a measure of the character's ability to resist mental control or influence, as well as to resist or avoid temptation.

Charm, which represents not only the ability to influence others, but to understand their emotions and motives.

Average characters have scores of 4 in all their abilities, so that the total of all six abilities would be 24. Since Space Force crew members are exceptional people, each player will distribute 30 points between these six scores, ensuring that no less than 1 nor more than 7 points are assigned to each ability score. Further, crew

members other than the Scientist must have scores of at least 3 in each of Strength and Endurance; this represents the physical fitness requirements of the Space Force.

Skill Selection

Each player character will begin play knowing a number of skills. The player chooses which skills the character knows, distributing 20 points to as many as 12 different skills. Any skill may be selected, provided the character has enough points to spend. Review the Skills section, below, for details on the various skills available.

Fill In The Blanks

Remaining spaces on the character record should be filled in now. All character descriptive information must be approved by the Game Master.

Each character has a number of **Hit Points** equal to the sum of **Strength** plus 2 times **Endurance** (i.e. from 3 to 21). See **Effects of Being Hit**, below, for an explanation of Hit Points.

All characters have **Lift** and **Carry** limits. The Lift limit is the maximum amount the character may normally lift to his or her chest level. This value is 50 pounds per point of Strength. The Carry limit is the maximum amount the character may carry without being slowed down; this limit is 15 pounds per point of

Strength. Attempting to carry more than this reduces movement by half.

Note that these figures are given in pounds at normal Earth gravity; a character's lifting and carrying ability will increase in low gravity environments, and will decrease in high gravity, generally in direct proportion to the gravity level. For example, in 1.5 G gravity, character's have Lift and Carry limits that are divided by 1.5. In general, the Lift and Carry numbers should not be increased to more than double regardless of gravity, due to the fact that items carried still have mass (and thus, inertia) even in low gravity.

Starting Equipment

Unlike other role-playing games, accumulating loot is not generally a goal of players in this game. The Space Force will issue equipment to the crew of a ship based on their needs for the mission; a player character may attempt to requisition any item the player believes is needed, and the Director will then decide whether or not the requested item is available.

Generally, each military member will be issued a Vulcan pistol if he or she has the **shooting** skill. All crew members may bring a small amount of personal items, i.e. toiletries, small keepsakes, and so on. Scientists have been known to bring ordinary handguns, which are usually secured in the ship's weapon locker alongside the issued blasters.

Skills

Skills define what a character knows or can do. Each character knows several skills, and more can be learned through training later in the game.

Ability and Skill Rolls

Standard **ability rolls** are made using 1d20, adding the relevant ability score (as given in these rules or decided by the GM), and any other bonuses or penalties which may apply. The result is compared to the **difficulty** of the roll, again as determined by the circumstances, the rules, and the GM's option. Ability rolls are frequently used when no specific skill applies to an activity, and are also called for as **saving throws** to resist or avoid various unpleasant situations.

Skill rolls are performed exactly like ability rolls, with the skill bonus for the most appropriate skill added to the total.

Note that there are situations described in these rules when a skill level may actually be applied to an ability roll.

Difficulty is generally calculated in one of two ways. First, and simplest, is the **standard difficulty** figure, which is 15. Any roll totaling 15 or higher is a success; any roll of less than 15 is a failure. Standard difficulty applies when there is no other, more specific way to determine the difficulty of the roll.

The second kind of difficulty is **calculated**. In general, a calculated difficulty is the result of some other character's skill roll, possibly made at some earlier time. When two characters make skill rolls at the same time in direct

opposition to each other, this is referred to as an **opposed** die roll. When a calculated difficulty is used, the "defender" rolls first, and then the "attacker" rolls; the attacker's total must **equal or exceed** the defender's total in order for the attacker to succeed. If there is some question as to which character is which, the GM will of course make the final ruling.

For example, a character forges a requisition document allowing her to acquire equipment not approved by her commanding officer. She makes a roll, adding her Dexterity and Forgery skill level, and records the number. When she presents the document to the Quartermaster, he makes a roll and adds his Intelligence, and any other skill the GM may consider relevant. If the result is **equal to or greater than** the number rolled by the forger, he detects the forgery; if less, he does not.

In certain circumstances, a **static difficulty** may be calculated and used repeatedly. The most obvious case of this is the **defense rating**, as explained in the Combat section. A static difficulty is equal to 11 plus the relevant ability score and skill level.

If a character wishes to perform an action for which he or she does not actually have a skill, the GM may choose to allow the roll at a penalty of -5, or may simply declare that the action fails, whichever he or she feels is appropriate.

Automatic Failure

Any natural (i.e. unmodified) roll of 1 on any 1d20 roll is an automatic failure, regardless of bonuses that may apply.

Doubles, Triples, and So On

Whenever a character performs a skill roll and the result is 10 or more points higher than he or she would have needed to succeed, the roll is called a **double**. The exact effect of a double varies, and is usually up to the GM; in the specific case of combat, a double results in double damage being done by the attack.

Rolling 20 or more points higher than needed is a **triple**, 30 or more points a **quadruple**, and so on, and the effects scale directly as you would expect (i.e. a triple on an attack does 3 times normal damage).

Taking your Time

In non-stressful (i.e. non-combat) situations, a character may take more time to prepare for and perform a skill roll. This is normally at least three times the normal time, but not less than one minute; if this much uninterrupted time is taken, the difficulty is reduced by 5 points. Note that this cannot be done for attack rolls.

Automatic Success

Skill rolls made in non-stressful circumstances may sometimes be allowed to automatically succeed. This should only be allowed if the total of the ability score and skill level is equal to or greater than the difficulty.

The Director may disallow this any time he or she wants, for no reason whatsoever; in particular, if the consequences of failure are serious, the dice must be rolled. This rule is meant simply as a convenience for the Director.

Non-Proficiency

In some cases, a player may want to use a Skill his or her character does not actually know. The Director may allow this to be done with an effective skill level of -5. Alternately, if the player is able to convince the Director that a skill the character does possess is similar enough to the skill he or she actually needs, the Director may allow the player to roll at a level equal to one-half (rounded down) of the specified skill level.

Skill Descriptions

The standard skills available to player characters are listed below. Each skill indicates the ability score that usually applies to rolls involving that skill, but note that the Director may always choose a different ability if he or she believes it more appropriate to a specific situation.

For convenience, the special skills used in combat are listed separately.

Combat Skills

Characters attacking with an unfamiliar weapon may almost always use a level of 0 (zero); specific exceptions are given in the skill descriptions below, and of course the Director may make additional exceptions as he or she sees fit.

Archery (Dexterity) applies to attacks with a bow of any sort, including short and long bows as well as modern compound bows. It does not apply to attacks made with a crossbow, which uses the **shooting** skill described below.

Brawling (Dexterity) is used when the character attacks using hands or feet (i.e. punching or kicking).

Dodging (Dexterity) allows the character to avoid being hit in combat by moving out of the way quickly. The level of this skill adds directly to the character's Defense Rating, as explained in the Combat section, and additionally rolls may be made against this skill to completely avoid certain types of relatively slow-moving missiles (for example, rocks rolling down a cliff).

Fencing (Dexterity) applies to attacks made with swords of any kind.

Knife-Fighting (Dexterity) is the art of attacking with a knife or dagger. This does not include throwing knives, as that is a different skill.

Knife Throwing (Dexterity) is the skill of throwing knives. Those who do not have this skill will find attacking in this way very difficult, as knives are not usually balanced such that they can be thrown like darts; the non-proficiency level of -5 should always be used in such cases.

Shooting (Dexterity) is used whenever the character fires a gun. This includes both pistols and rifles, and applies equally to projectile weapons (traditional firearms) and blasters (such as the Vulcan pistol).

Regular Skills

Acrobat (Dexterity) allows the character to perform feats of Acrobatics; what exactly this entails is left to the imagination of the player and the discretion of the Director. Also, Acrobats add three paces to the distance they may fall without taking damage.

Actor (Charm) allows the character to convincingly act a part. A disguise may help with this, at the Director's option.

Astrogator (Intelligence) is used to figure out the location of a spacecraft by means of sighting various stars using a multiscopes, sextant, or other similar device.

Climbing (Dexterity) allows the character to climb cliffs, walls, etc. Special equipment may be required for certain climbs, and lacking proper climbing gear will always increase the difficulty.

Computer Programmer (Intelligence) allows the character to program computers, but does not include repairing them.

Craft (Dexterity) refers to any skilled profession controlled primarily by the character's Dexterity; this includes such things as Pottery, Woodworking, and so on. When listing a craft skill on a character sheet, the player should write it thusly: "Pottery (Craft)" or "Woodworking (Craft)."

Drive Automobile (Dexterity) is the skill used when operating cars, light trucks (i.e. pickup trucks) and so on.

Drive Truck (Dexterity) is the skill used when operating large commercial trucks, particularly those having attached trailers.

Drive Motorcycle (Dexterity) applies to operating two-wheeled, powered vehicles, and in general to three-wheeled vehicles as well.

Electronic Technician (Intelligence) allows the character to repair modern electronic devices such as radios, video cameras, computers, and so on.

Find and Disarm Traps (Intelligence) allows the character to detect traps; a separate roll to disarm the trap may be allowed, depending on how the trap functions, but this roll will usually be modified by Dexterity rather than Intelligence. Detecting a trap only happens when the character is actively searching.

Forgery (Dexterity) allows the user to attempt to duplicate official documents or the handwriting style of a specific person. The forger rolls a quality value using 1d20 plus the skill level and ability score; those inspecting the document may detect the forgery on a cursory examination by rolling 1d10 plus Intelligence, while a detailed examination allows a roll of 1d20 plus Intelligence. The Director should allow the character performing a detailed examination to add any skill level that seems reasonable.

Geologist (Intelligence) allows the user to determine approximate location from samples of local rock, and to attempt to determine the material content of rocks.

Historian (Intelligence) permits the user to attempt to remember or find information of a historical nature. Access to a well-stocked library will lower the difficulty.

Language (Intelligence) permits a character to speak a language. All characters begin play knowing their own native language with a skill level equal to Intelligence.

Mechanic (Intelligence) includes knowledge of machine operation and adjustment as well as repair. Advanced devices, electronics, and so on are not included.

Medical (Intelligence) indicates that the character is trained as a medic (level 1+), a nurse (level 3+), or a doctor (level 5+).

Navigator (Intelligence) allows the character to determine location by looking at the stars. This ability can only be used when the stars can be seen at night.

Outdoorsman (Intelligence) allows one to attempt to survive in the wild by finding food; this includes fishing, foraging, and hunting, though the Director may require an attack roll for the latter.

Pick Locks (Dexterity) allows the character to open locks. Increase the difficulty if the character does not have appropriate tools (or, alternately, the Director may rule that the lock cannot be picked if some adequate substitute tool is not available).

Pick Pockets (Dexterity) allows the character to pick other character's pockets, pouches, etc. If this roll fails, the character must roll again to avoid being noticed by the intended victim.

Pilot Aircraft (Dexterity) allows the character to operate an aircraft. This skill also applies to flying appropriately-equipped spacecraft in an atmosphere.

Pilot Spacecraft (Intelligence) is used when the character operates a thrust-powered vehicle in space, in particular in zero gravity and/or vacuum.

Play Instrument (Dexterity) allows the character to play a musical instrument.

Prestidigitation (Dexterity) allows the user to perform feats of misdirection. The user can attempt to conceal items and produce them suddenly (flowers or coins are popular choices); the player rolls for a quality normally using 1d20 plus the skill level and ability score, while onlookers roll 1d10 plus Intelligence to detect the deception. Characters who also have this skill may make a normal roll of their own using 1d20 plus the skill level and Intelligence to see through the deception. Of course, when used to produce a weapon (for example), knowing where it came from may not be very important.

Profession (Intelligence) refers to any skilled profession controlled primarily by the character's Intelligence. The Director must arbitrate which professions exist in the game, and the effects of belonging to one. As with the Craft skill, write this skill down as in a form similar to "Accountant (Profession)" or "Attorney (Profession)."

Read/Write Language (Intelligence) allows a character to read and write a given language. Actually, this skill will permit a character to write any language using the character set/symbols of the chosen language. In real-world terms, someone who knows English and French and learns to read and write English likely can read and write French also; however, such a character who also learns to speak Chinese

would not be able to read or write that language without additional training. Generally, all characters begin play knowing their own native language with a skill level equal to Intelligence; few if any people working in space will be completely illiterate.

Ride Animal (Dexterity) indicates that the character knows how to competently ride an animal. A specific sort of animal must be chosen when this skill is learned; the skill may be learned repeatedly for different sorts of steeds.

Seamanship (Dexterity) permits the character to act as a sailor aboard an ocean-going ship, riverboat, and so on, or to personally sail a sailboat. The character cannot operate out of sight of land without Navigator skill (or the assistance of a character with that skill). This particular skill may frequently be associated with any number of different ability scores, depending on the situation.

Sing (Charm) gives the character the ability to sing well; roll 1d20 plus skill level and ability score for a quality. In general, assume the quality indicates how well the singer has performed... no contest is usually relevant.

Stalking (Dexterity) allows the character to move silently in the wilderness.

Stealth (Intelligence) allows the character to move silently in urban areas.

Swimming (Dexterity) indicates that the character knows how to swim.

Tracking (Intelligence) allows the user to attempt to follow the trail of a person or animal in the wild.

Trapping (Intelligence) allows the user to attempt to trap animals in the wilderness. Building a trap takes time and materials, and requires a roll for success. Failing the roll could cause a mishap.

Advancement

In many role-playing games, character advancement is done by means of collecting experience points. In Space Force, each character's performance is rated in terms of **stars**. At the end of each adventure, the Director awards stars to the characters as follows:

First, each character who participated in the adventure receives one **mission star**. Mission stars are not awarded to characters who did not play a meaningful role in an adventure (in other words, cameos don't count).

Next, each character who instigated or participated in a **subplot** (see below) receives a star for so doing. Characters who somehow manage to participate in more than one subplot still receive just one star for this. If an episode was so action-packed that there was no time for subplots, the Director may choose to grant a second mission star to all participants.

If an actor does a particularly good job portraying his or her character, a **roleplaying star** is granted to that character. Generally, the Director should give about half of the participants this award, but of course may give out as many or as few as he or she feels are reasonable.

Player characters who receive stars do not need to keep track of which kind they are; only the total number must be tracked.

Between episodes, characters may spend stars to gain improved skills. The cost of improving a skill by 1 point is equal to the current ranking of that skill, plus 1. Thus, to improve a skill rating of 3 by one point, 4 stars must be expended.

Learning new skills is relatively rare. First, the actor must convince the Director that the character may reasonably learn the given skill; for example, an appropriate trainer may be required. The character usually must miss participating in an episode (though the Director may waive this requirement if desired) during which time the character learns the new skill. Of course, the player may play a different character in such a case.

When all of these requirements are met, the character must expend a number of stars equal to 8 minus the relevant ability score; when this has been done, the character gains a rating of 1 in the new skill.

Subplots

One common feature of television shows like Space Force is the **subplot**. A subplot is a sort of secondary plot, woven through the main plot. Subplots are often used as character development, wherein we as viewers get to learn more about the characters.

In the game, the Director creates the **backstory** of the main plot, which guides and informs the actions of the actors; the Director should not try to "drive" or "control" the main plot, except perhaps to keep it moving if it gets bogged down. But subplots are largely the

domain of the actors... it is up to the actors to initiate subplots and to involve each other in them. The Director can participate in a subplot, if there are NPCs who become involved, but otherwise the Director should

allow players to manage subplots by themselves as much as possible. The Director should take a firmer hand only if the subplot is harming the game for some players.

Combat

Time and Scale

Time is counted in combat in terms of **rounds**. A round is about ten seconds, though this should not be considered a hard-and-fast limit.

Distances in combat are measures in **paces**, a somewhat elastic measure, being about a yard but ranging from as short as 2.5 feet to as long as a meter. This flexibility is meant to allow the Director to use whatever kind of maps he or she prefers with minimal difficulty.

A normal character moves a number of paces per round equal to the sum of his or her Strength and Dexterity scores.

Surprise

If the Director decides it is possible that characters are surprised, each character who might be surprised must make a Surprise roll to avoid it. Two basic situations exist.

First, two or more characters suddenly see each other. For example, a character might open a door, only to come face-to-face with an enemy. In this case, characters on both sides must make standard Dexterity rolls of 15 or better, or be unable to act for one round.

Second, one group of characters may be laying in ambush for another group. In this case, if the ambushers are concealed the victims must roll to notice them or be surprised as above. (See the appropriate concealment skills to determine the roll needed). If the ambushers are simply waiting in a room unconcealed, so that it is similar to the face-to-face example above, the victims need to make Dexterity rolls of 15 or better. The

ambushers do not need to roll if they are prepared for the victims.

Attacks against a surprised opponent are at +5.

Initiative

Each round, every character who may act rolls 1d10 and adds his or her Dexterity to the result (except if a natural 1 is rolled). Characters act in descending order of Initiative number. Action is simultaneous on the same Initiative number, so two characters can possibly shoot each other.

Each round the Director will count off Initiative numbers, from 17 down. Players are responsible for calling out their actions when their "number is up." A player with a high number may wait until a lower number if desired, and may even continue holding an action into subsequent rounds (though this does not allow the character to act more than once in a round, but rather only to act on whatever number he or she desires in the subsequent round).

Actions Allowed In A Round

A character may generally perform a movement action and an attack in any given round. These actions may be performed in any order, but movement may not be split; the character may move and then attack, or attack and then move, but may not make a partial move, attack, and then make another partial move.

Each action performed in a round happens on a subsequent Initiative number. A character who has rolled a 6 for Initiative may move on 6 and attack on 5, or attack on 6 and move on 5, whichever he or she prefers.

A character may also choose to **sprint**, performing two full moves in a row (on subsequent initiative numbers). The character must make both moves in a more or less straight line, and may not normally attack or take any other action. If the Director does allow some additional action, a penalty of -5 is applied to any relevant skill or ability roll.

Attack Rolls

The attacker rolls 1d20 and adds the relevant skill level and ability score to the total, as well as any other bonuses or penalties that might apply. If the result is equal to or greater than the defender's Defense Rating, the attack is successful, and the attacker rolls the appropriate damage die (as listed on the weapons table, and explained under Damage, below).

For melee attacks, you will normally add the character's Strength to the damage total.

If the roll is a **double**, add an additional die to the damage. Do not apply bonuses (such as for Strength) to this; simply add another die of damage. Add another die in this way for a **triple**, and so on.

A natural (unmodified) roll of 1 is always a miss, as noted previously.

Off Hand Penalty

Normal characters have a preferred hand, right or left; the player should choose this for his or her character as desired. Performing an attack with a weapon in the "off" hand is done at a penalty of -3 on the attack roll. Characters having Dexterity of 6 have a penalty of -2, while those having Dexterity 7 have a penalty of -1.

Ranged Weapons

When shooting or throwing a weapon, roll the attack normally if within the range given for the weapon. Attacks may be made up to twice this distance at a penalty of -5. It is not normally possible to attack with a ranged weapon beyond two times the given range.

Generally, if an attack with a ranged weapon misses, the missile continues in the same general direction; the Director should roll an unmodified attack roll against each potential victim who might be hit, starting with any individuals who are closer to the attacker than the intended target and working away. The Director may, at his or her option, choose to only make three such rolls before declaring the attack a complete miss; the exception to this rule is that any attack with explosive projectiles *must* be resolved in most cases.

Fighting with Two Weapons

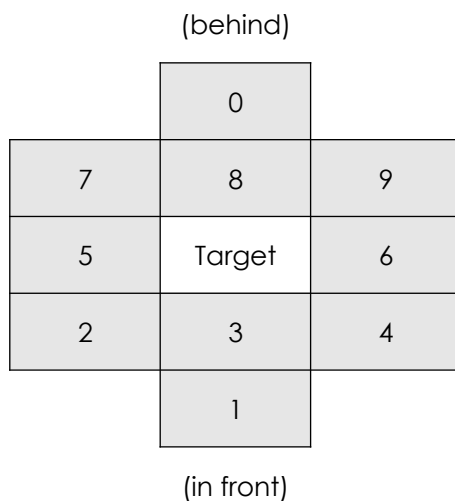
A character may use two weapons, one in each hand. Of course, they must be one handed weapons. The usual off-hand penalty is applied to the off-hand weapon. These attacks are made on subsequent Initiative numbers (not at the same moment), and

whichever attack is made second suffers an additional penalty of -5 on the attack roll.

A character may perform a movement action between these two attacks, if desired. A character who has rolled a 4 for Initiative might attack on 4, move on 3, and attack again on 2, for example.

Grenade-Like Missiles

When throwing grenade-like missiles (flasks of oil, etc.), a successful attack roll indicates a direct hit. Otherwise, the Director will roll 1d10 and consult the diagram below to determine where the missile hit. Treat each number as representing a pace-sized square.



Damage

There are two kinds of damage: Stunning and Killing. Killing damage, naturally, can result in the character's death. Stunning damage tends to knock characters unconscious. Weapon listings on the Weapons table include which type of damage is normally done, as well as the standard damage die to be rolled in the event of a hit. The attacker's Strength

bonus is usually added to damage from melee weapons, and other bonuses or penalties may apply.

When an attack does Killing damage to a character, the number is deducted from the character's Current Hit Points. If the number of Current Hit Points ever reaches zero, the character must make a Endurance ability roll or begin dying. If successful, the character is unconscious for 1d20 rounds, but is **stable** (see below). A dying creature loses one point of Endurance per round, until zero is reached (and the creature dies) or until someone renders aid to the character (causing the character to become stable).

A character who becomes stable will be unconscious 1d20 rounds from that point. Any time an unconscious character awakens, he or she has at least 1 Current Hit Point. Time spent unconscious due to damage does not affect the character's Stun total.

Stun Points begin at zero and are totaled separately. If the Stun total ever equals or exceeds the Current Hit Points, the character must make a Endurance ability roll or become unconscious 1d20 rounds.

A conscious character who has Stun Points equal to or greater than Current Hit Points is **punchy**. Punchy characters have a penalty of -5 on all attack rolls, as well as any skill rolls; skills with a percentile value suffer a -25% penalty. Of course, each and every successful hit against a punchy combatant necessitates another roll to avoid becoming unconscious (as given above).

Normal Healing

Characters heal 1 point of Killing damage every day, provided that normal sleep is possible. Characters who choose full bedrest regain Hit Points twice a day. Stun points are deducted at a rate equal to one-fourth of the character's Endurance each hour (rounded to the nearest figure).

Lost Endurance points recover at a rate of 1d4 per week. This rate may be increased by +1 if the character is receiving regular hospital-equivalent medical care.

Note that the character's Maximum Hit Points are reduced appropriately when Endurance points are lost (and are regained as the Endurance points are recovered). Current Hit Points are normally limited to no more than the Maximum Hit Points.

Rest

Normal rest assumes that the character is getting at least 6 hours of sleep per night, minus the character's Endurance bonus. No healing is gained if this condition is not met!

Full rest assumes that the character is in bed resting at least 18 hours in every 24, and is not performing any strenuous or stressful activity.

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