

DROPFLEET COMMANDER CORE RULES

FIRST PRINCIPLES

The Golden Age of humanity has passed into history. The Cradle Worlds and Earth are lost to the insidious Scourge, parasitic and implacable alien invaders. All that is left of the human race was scattered to the far flung reaches of its once large empire.

Over 160 years later, the resurgence of man has come. Banding together against the foe, the once scattered mining stations and frontier worlds have formed the United Colonies of Mankind, and are now ready to launch the reconquest of the Cradle Worlds to win back humanity's home planets.

These are not the only interested parties however. The shadowy Post Human Republic wait in the wings – their motives are unknown, but have been hostile since splintering away from their fellow humans just before the Scourge invasion. Whatever their end goal, it seems to run counter to the reconquest, and they are not above spilling human or Scourge blood to achieve their aims.

Even more mercurial are the Shaltari, highly advanced aliens whose shifting web of alliances and tribal disputes have had them aid and hinder humanity to equal extents. Utterly changeable, their technology and eons of experience make them a deadly enemy – often for friend and foe alike.

The reconquest has begun. Throughout the Cradle Worlds thousands of ships carve the firmament into living flame as they surge over embattled worlds. On the ground all eyes look skyward to try and foresee their fate – whether it will be the triumphant return of their own space-borne warriors, or the fiery doom brought by orbital bombardment and invasion by their foes.

THE GAME

Dropfleet Commander is a tabletop miniatures wargame for fighting orbital invasion battles and escort fleet engagements in the Dropzone Commander universe. Players take on the role of admirals and captains commanding their ships as they shoot and manoeuvre, victory belongs to the commander that can triumph both in orbit and by claiming the key areas of the planet below.

In this book you will find;

- **Core Mechanics** – the game rules of how to play Dropfleet.
- **Ship and Weapon System Special Rules** – ways to bend or break the core rules.
- **Orbital and Ground Combat** – rules for fighting around planets and conquering them!
- **The Scenarios** – different sorts of games to play with Dropfleet.
- **Fleet Lists and Group Building Rules** – information on putting together your forces for battle.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Start by taking a read over the next section – the core mechanics – to get a handle on the general rules. By the time you've done that you'll know enough to play a game. For a first outing you might try Scenario 1 in the scenarios section and fight with just a few ships a side. As you grow more confident try some larger games with more ships and then you'll be ready for the added strategies of full orbital combat.

GAME COMPONENTS

Dice

Dropfleet uses six-sided dice throughout the game both for its ease of availability and robust handling characteristics. Most of the dice rolls players need to make require equalling or bettering a target number and are written as a number with a plus sign after it, i.e. 5+, meaning the dice must roll a 5 or 6 to succeed.

When referencing dice rolls the rules will refer to six-sided dice as a D6. Rolling more dice is indicated with a number before i.e. if instructed to 'roll 3D6', players would roll 3 dice, '4D6' would be 4 dice etc.

If you are asked to roll a D3, simply roll a D6 and a result of a 1 or a 2 would equal a 1, a result of 3 or 4 would equal a 2 and a result of 5 or 6 would equal a 3.

Dice roll modifiers

Certain special circumstances can mean that modifiers apply to dice rolls. These modifiers can be negative (e.g. -1 to the target number) or positive (e.g. +1 to the target number). Modifiers are always applied to the target number and they don't change the number you roll on the dice.

For example, if you normally needed to roll a 4+ and had a +1 modifier to the target number you would only succeed on a roll of 5 or 6. Likewise if you needed a 5+ and had a -2 modifier, you would need a 3 or more to succeed (5+, with the minus 2 modifier = 3+ to succeed).

Modifiers can never make results impossible or a foregone conclusion. If a modifier would make a target number of 7+ or 1+ (i.e. impossible to achieve or impossible to fail), this is reduced to a 6+ and 2+ respectively.

Rerolls

Sometimes players will have the ability to 'reroll' certain dice. This lets the player pick up dice that have produced an unsatisfactory result and roll them again. The result of the reroll always stands even if it is worse than the original. Rerolled dice may never be rerolled in any circumstances.

Measuring distances

Dropfleet Commander uses inches for its unit of measurement. Players will need a tape measure or ruler marked in inches to measure distances. Throughout this book shorthand for measurements is used; quotation marks after a number indicate the inch distance, e.g. 12" would be 12 inches, 30" would 30 inches etc.

PRE-MEASURING

In Dropfleet Commander it is perfectly fine to pre-measure distances before moving or shooting, or at any time in between. Any 'fog of war' is taken into account in the game rules already and your captains (or equivalents) have the very best detection and calculation equipment of a future universe on hand. This means that players may measure any distances at any time.

Note:

While Pre-measuring means that any player may measure any distance at any time, sportsmanship should be considered and player are encouraged to take each other's word on measurements. Measuring every distance straight after your opponent has done just that leads to a very negative gaming experience all round.



"War is a sad cycle, the inevitable folly of mankind. Though we cling to peace, be damn sure war will come again and sooner than you think. The pressure mounts, the land bleeds. We must build the ships of tomorrow today if we are to prevail!" **President Charles K. Schneider, 2097**

Miniatures

Miniatures are the models you use for playing the game. In Dropfleet miniatures means one thing - ships; big ships, little ships, swarming fighters, kill-hungry bombers, torpedoes, drones, space stations, satellites and more.

Orbital fleet combat involves huge distances and perspectives, where the gross tonnage of a battleship dwarfs the size of a human, but is in turn made to seem miniscule by the planet it is fighting over. For this reason the representative scales in Dropfleet Commander are not accurate to real life, but they are accurate in and of themselves; Ships in a fleet are in scale with each other, but not with the planet they are fighting over.

This relative scale therefore affects gameplay. For the purposes of clarity and ease of use, all distances in the game are measured from the flight stem of each ship or asset unless otherwise stated in specific rules (e.g. Clusters and Sectors, explained on p74).



Base Contact

Occasionally the rules will reference game objects being 'in contact' or tell players to place tokens or other game elements in 'base contact' with a miniature's base as a way of showing that a ship is in close proximity to something. In the case of ships with very large or irregular shaped bases this may not be possible – in such cases, place the token, ship etc. as close as possible to the base, or use a 'Traffic Jam' token as detailed below.



Traffic James and Ship Placement

An unfortunate reality of moving miniatures around on the tabletop is that occasionally you'll end with a 'traffic jam' where several miniatures need to be in the same place (or close to it) at the same time. This is especially true of larger ships which can overhang their bases by a considerable distance, but it can happen with the smallest of vessels as well. Movement in Dropfleet is generally flexible enough that a ship almost never has to move to an exact spot so the problems usually arise from trying to squeeze the last possible inch of movement or keep a weapon system in arc to fire.



The solution is to use a marker to show the exact position of the intersecting ships until they move far enough apart to place models in their correct positions again, in the meantime they are simply placed as close as possible. These markers should show ship facing, and players should be as precise as possible in their placement to avoid arguments.

Note:

While not the best way of playing in tournaments or competitive play, some Players may decide on a different house rule for this situation. Simply rule that ships may not move to any position where they cannot be physically placed. This speeds up the game and reduces the use of tokens. However, it is not a fool proof option – in certain situations this can cause problems due to relative miniature size and placement when interacting with order. If it causes problems (even in friendly games), revert to using markers as above.

Other Components

Dropfleet Commander uses tokens and markers to track certain actions or events during a game. Many of these are designed to give both players a visual reminder of continuing effects and unit placement, but some are for convenience as it is often easier to use a dice or token next to a miniature than it is to have to keep notes. Some players prefer to keep gaming areas free of clutter, however, so below is a breakdown of the components and their necessity.

Necessary on the tabletop (i.e. both players need to be aware):

- 'Spike' status markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Silent running markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Orbit level markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Clusters, Sectors and Launch Assets

Not strictly necessary:

- Group cards
- Hull damage indicators
- Crippling damage markers
- Ship stat cards

Extra dice are also always useful, and a pad and pen can often be helpful if players want to keep notes.

Playing Space

Dropfleet Commander is usually played over a 4ft x 4ft gaming area, and scenarios in this book are based on this as the combat area. Players may find it easier to play on slightly wider tables to have space for reserves, destroyed ship miniatures, spare dice, and other game components.

Integration with Dropzone Commander

Dropfleet Commander is the companion game to Dropzone Commander. In Dropfleet Commander players clash in orbit for control of the atmosphere, and deploy troops to strategic areas of the planet to liberate or conquer. These troops fight on the planet's surface for supremacy, with vast armies of tanks, infantry and air support waging war across entire cities.

As a guideline, a single Strike Carrier in Dropfleet (one of the smallest individual ships in the game) is capable of carrying 100 Dropzone Commander dropships, or 250-400 individual tanks or other AFVs. This means that even one ground combat in Dropfleet Commander is many times the size of a standard Dropzone Commander engagement.

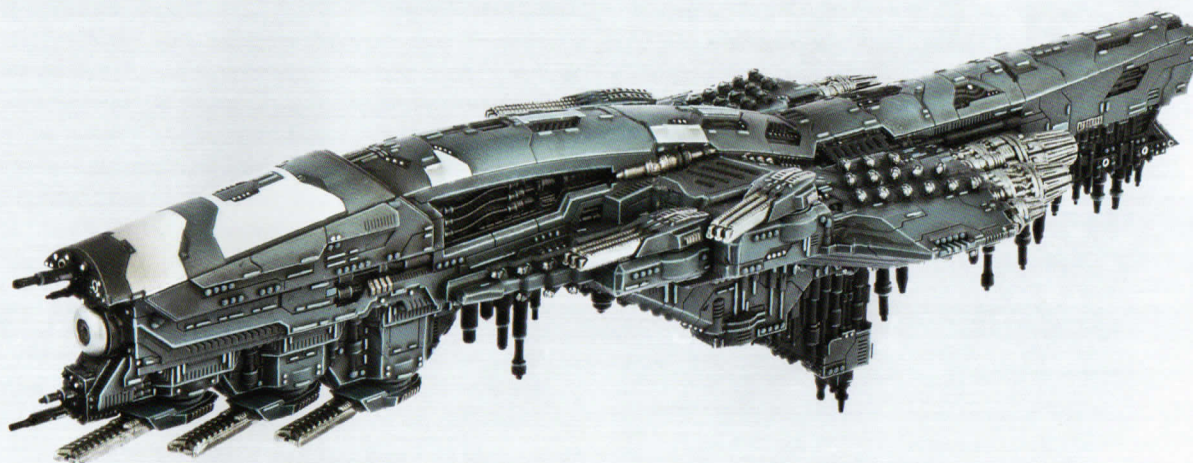
As a result, linked campaigns between the two systems contain necessary abstractions to suit both games. Playing accurately connected games would be a huge undertaking, and while there is information in the campaign section later on about this, it is preferable to play using the scaled version of linked campaigns (also laid out later in the book).

Fierce but fair

Dropfleet Commander is designed as a competitive and balanced game, playable in friendly, campaign or competitive setting with equal enjoyment for players at all levels. Gamers are encouraged to use every tactic and ruse they can within the rules to conquer the Cradle worlds for their faction and win the day. However, it is important to note that sportsmanship is key in any game, and players are urged to keep the fun and fair mindedness in all aspects of their gameplay.

Disagreements

The rules are written to cover as many conceivable eventualities as possible, but there will always be occasions where obscure situations are not addressed. If re-reading the relevant rules section does not provide an answer to a problem, and the players cannot agree on how to proceed, simply have one player roll a dice. On a 1-3 one interpretation is correct, on a 4-6 it is the other. This makes for a fair and impartial ruling when players can't agree, and stops further arguments.



"Success, I trust — indeed have little doubt — will crown our zealous and well-meant endeavors: if not, our Country will, I believe, sooner forgive an Officer for attacking his Enemy than for letting it alone." **Admiral Horatio Nelson, 1794**

CORE MECHANICS

The 'core mechanics' are the things that make the game work so that ships can move and shoot, take damage and explode in a variety of ways. As admiral of your fleet you decide on the actions your ships take and then resolve them using dice rolls. The first key to guiding your fleet to victory is understanding the ships themselves through their characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS

The strengths and weakness of different ships and weapon systems in the game are shown through their characteristics. These show how fast they are, how much damage they can take and so on. It's worth starting with a quick read through this section of the characteristics as they are of key importance in Dropfleet.

Ship characteristics

There are a total of ten ship characteristics; Name, Scan, Signature, Thrust, Hull, Armour, Point Defence, Group, Tonnage, Special and Points. Here's an example of one kind of Scourge ship's statistics (known as a 'stats bar').

An explanation of each characteristic follows. Sometimes for clarity certain characteristics may be omitted from a ship's stat line if they aren't directly relevant. For example Points is often left out from a ship's 'battle stats' since you don't need to refer to it during the game.

NAME	SCAN	SIG	THRUST	HULL	A	PD	G	T	SPECIAL	POINTS
IFRIT	6"	8"	10"	10	4+	6	1-2	M		110

Name

What the ship type is called. Certain ships may have individual and unique names, but they always belong to a 'class' of ship. The name of the ship's class is shown here.

Scan

The Scan characteristic shows how good a ship is at spotting the enemy through a combination of sophisticated sensors, predictive software and crew competence. Scan range is primarily a 'technology' characteristic dictated by the best possible equipment that can be crammed on board so most ships from a particular race will have the same Scan value. Certain weapon systems can only be used within Scan range or become more effective when used within Scan range.

Signature

Signature shows how visible a ship is on enemy sensors and how far away it can be spotted. Most ships use forms of active countermeasures like chaff, ECM (electronic countermeasures – jamming) and other technologies to hide the ship by reducing its signature as much as possible. These countermeasures are considered to be in constant use and are taken into account in the ship's overall Signature. Certain kinds of damage, hard manoeuvring and firing weapon systems can all act to temporarily increase a ship's Signature. Signature can also be reduced in some circumstances, such as by adopting silent running protocols for example.

CORE RULE!

In space combat few weapons really have a 'maximum range'. Take away the effects of atmosphere and gravity from the energy of a shot - whether from a kinetic striker or a thermal beam - and it will keep going for an almost infinite distance.

However ships still need to be able to accurately predict where enemies will be when the weapon's fire reaches them in order to plot their location and accurately fire on them. What all this means is that when firing weapons in Dropfleet the Scan and Signature characteristics are used to determine a ship's effective range.

**Attacker's Scan + Target's Signature =
Weapon range for attacker.**

For ease of game play we assume all ships can see each other, achieving a 'soft lock' on enemy ships at all times rather than actually making them invisible to one another. This is not good enough to use for targeting weapons but it is enough to determine their approximate type, location and direction of travel as represented by the models on the tabletop.

Thrust

Thrust is a ship's maximum move distance per game turn in inches – how far it can go across the tabletop in one move. Several factors such as the ship's orders or battle damage can affect available Thrust. Under ordinary circumstances a ship must use at least half of its available Thrust for movement each turn (see the Orders and Special Orders sections of the rules for more details).

Hull

Hull is the number of damage points a ship can withstand before it is destroyed. Hull is a function of overall size and inherent structural integrity. This means it is possible for ships with good armour to have a weak hull and vice versa. Lost Hull points can be tracked on a ship's base using the pegs and number system provided, or if players prefer with a dice/counter placed beside the ship.

Armour (A)

In comparison to civilian vessels, true warships are always 'armoured' in some way to make them more resistant to damage. This can range from the basic hardening of individual components and incorporating multiple redundant back-up systems to being sheathed in metres-thick plates of highly advanced armour. In game terms the Armour characteristic is a saving throw on a D6 against each point of Hull damage taken expressed as 3+, 4+ etc. When a ship is damaged roll a D6 for each point of damage inflicted on it. Each successful armour save negates one point of Hull damage.

Point Defence (PD)

All fighting ships carry some sort of point defence to protect themselves against small objects. Point Defences are the equivalent of Active Countermeasures on ground based units; systems that identify and neutralise incoming threats to the ship – everything from meteorites to nuclear-tipped missiles.

The exact weapons used can take many forms: pulse lasers, rapid fire gauss guns, interceptor missiles, flak rockets, energised plasma arcs – the list is endless. All of these are small, fast-firing weapon systems with the response time necessary to intercept tiny, rapidly-moving targets at close range. For the most part Point Defence relies on quantity rather than quality, and the number indicated by this characteristic indicates the number of dice the ship can roll in self-defence when attacked by enemy Close Action weapons and some Launch Assets. These rules are covered later on.

PASSIVE COUNTERMEASURES

Some advanced ships have additional 'passive' countermeasures like energy shields, ablative clouds and force fields to protect their ships in addition to regular armour. Passive countermeasures are shown by an additional Armour characteristic (e.g. 3+/4+ indicating a Passive Countermeasure save of 4+). Passive countermeasures are highly effective because they give a ship protection against critical hits which would otherwise punch through armour completely.

The downside to passive countermeasures is that they often increase a ship's Signature and may prevent it using its Point Defence while they're operational – Any negatives are covered in the ship's specific information, or in faction specific rules (e.g. for the Shaltari)

*When making saves, players always use a ship's best save possible (i.e. if the ship had a 2+/5+, usually a 2+ would be needed, unless it was a critical hit, at which point the 5+ would be used). This is covered in greater detail in the **Firing** section.*

Group (G)

Group indicates the normal operating parameters for ships of this class within the larger fleet. Smaller vessels such as frigates will tend to operate in groups of one to four of the same type of ship working together, while large vessels might only be found together in one or twos. The Group characteristic is used when choosing a fleet before the game (see Fleet Selection).

Tonnage (T)

There are four Tonnage categories in Dropfleet commander; Light, Medium, Heavy and Super Heavy. As with the Group characteristic, Tonnage is primarily used in conjunction with Fleet Selection as players will often have to consider

the Tonnage of the vessels under their command. Tonnage also figures into scenarios where victory conditions are often calculated using the tonnage of surviving vessels.

Tonnage is shown in a ship's stats bar as a single letter, with the meanings explained below:

L – Light Ships (usually frigates or strike carriers)

M – Medium ships (usually cruisers or fleet carriers)

H – Heavy ships (usually heavy cruisers or battlecruisers)

S – Super Heavy ships (usually battleships and dreadnoughts)

Special

This section lists any special rules that may apply to the ship. This represents particular traits of a ship's design, special abilities or weaknesses the vessel may have. Some examples include:

- **Launch:** The ship can launch strike craft and/or munitions.
- **Atmospheric:** The ship may enter the atmospheric layer during orbital combat.

A detailed list of all common ship Special Rules can be found in the 'Ship Special Rules' Section.

Some ships have unique rules that are specific to that faction and ship class alone, such as sensor jamming abilities or situational bonuses. Any unique Special Rules not in the 'Special' section of a ship's stats bar will be shown following the bar with details of the unique rules used.

POINTS

Points indicate the value of the ship relative to the rest of the fleet and the cost of including it in your force. This value also comes into play when selecting your fleet and assembling battle groups before the game, and helps create a balanced game for both players. This is covered in more detail in the 'Fleet Selection' area of the rules later on.

"From this moment onwards, battles between ships of the sea will forever be eclipsed by those of the stars. May the coming maelstrom, the first of its kind, be the last. Alas, I fear it shall be merely a shadow of those to come." Star Admiral Belladonna S. Collins, 2185

WEAPON SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

Most ships in Dropfleet are armed with one or more weapon systems. These can range from a mass of turret-mounted rail cannons to huge spinal-mount energy weapons capable of cutting enemy craft in half with a single blast. Weapon systems have their own characteristic line so a full ship description also includes the characteristics for both the ship itself and for each of its weapon systems. Below we can see an example of some Scourge weapons.

TYPE	LOCK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	ARC	SPECIAL
OCULUS BEAMS	3+	1	2	F	SCALD
FURNACE CANNONS	4+	4	1	F (N)	ALT-1 SCALD, BURNTHROUGH (8)
FURNACE CANNONS	2+	1	1	F (N)	ALT-1, SCALD, BURNTHROUGH (4), FLASH
PLASMA STORM	3+	D6+2	1	F/S/R	SCALD, CLOSE ACTION

Lock

Lock is the weapon system's 'to hit' roll and represents a combination of tracking speed and power-up delay as well as inherent accuracy. When rolling to hit, each of the weapon system's Attack dice scores a hit if it equals or beats the Lock value.

Attack

'Attack' shows the number of Attack dice the weapon system rolls, with each dice typically representing a salvo or volley from the same weapon system. Each attack dice has to score equal or higher than the weapon's Lock value to score a hit.

Damage

Some weapon systems hit harder than others and will do a corresponding amount of damage to an enemy hull. Damage indicates the number of Hull points inflicted by each Attack dice from the weapon system which successfully hits and damages a ship.

Arc

Each weapon system has a designated fire arc it can make attacks into. These arcs are indicated with the following letters:

F – Front
F (N) – Front Narrow
R – Rear
S – Side

Side facing weapons may also have an addition notation, i.e. Right or Left. If the weapon has no extra note and only says S it may fire to either side – left or right. If it has the (Right) or (Left) notation it may only fire on that side (in addition to any other arcs shown).

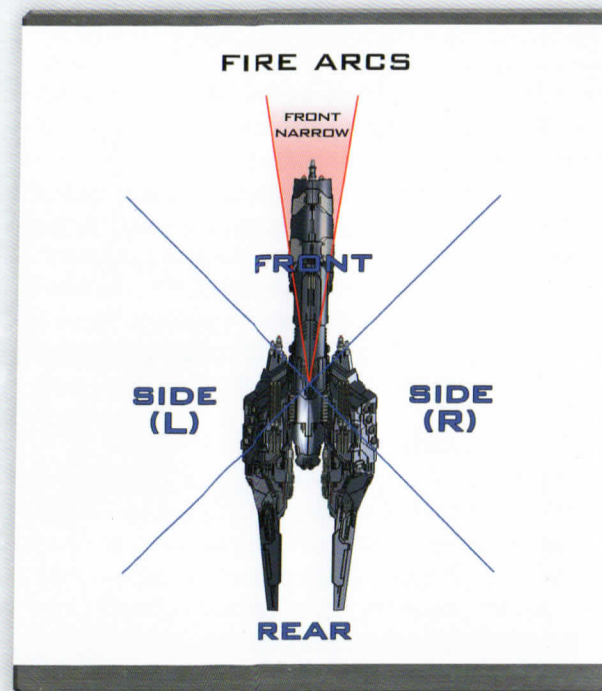
e.g. a ship has three weapons profiles. One has arc: F/S/R, the second has arc: S/R, and the last has arc: F/S (Right).

In this case the first weapon would be able to fire from its Front arc, either Side arc or its Rear arc.

The second weapon could fire from either one of its Side arcs or its Rear arc.

The last weapon may only fire from the Front arc or the arc on its Right side, as it has the S (Right) notation.

Weapon arcs are normally 90 degrees but some weapons systems are restricted to a 22 degree narrow (N) arc instead. Ship bases include these arcs for ease of use – thin ridges delineate front, side and rear arcs, and the raised area at the front the base shows the front narrow arc.



Special

A number of weapon systems have special rules to reflect their effects. Some examples include:

- **Scald:** Increase the target's armour save by +1 when within Scan range.
- **Bloom:** Add a minor spike to the firing ship when this weapon is fired.

See Special Weapons Rules for more information.

GAME TURN SEQUENCE

A game of Dropfleet Commander is played out in a series of rounds, referred to as turns. The number of turns played will vary depending on the scenario being played but four to six turns for a game is typical. In each turn all of the ships on the tabletop will get a chance to move and shoot, known as Activating. The order that ships activate in is determined by their Strategy Rating.

Every ship in a player's fleet is fielded as part of a **Group**, which is a part of a larger formation called a **Battlegroup**. During the turn, Battlegroups on the tabletop activate one after another and the sub group of ships in them take their actions individually in an order of the controlling player's choosing. Once all Battlegroups have been activated the turn is over.

Game turn summary

1) Planning phase

- Both players pick up their Battlegroup cards and stack them into strategy decks. When both players are ready the activation phase begins. Battlegroups that are unavailable to activate (usually for scenario reasons) may not be included in the strategy deck this turn.
- Discard Cards:** Each player may now discard any unwanted Command Cards.
- Draw Cards:** Each player may now draw cards up to the Admiral Value (AV) of their most senior friendly Admiral on the table.
- Cleanup:** Any affects that result from special rules or Command Cards are addressed now.

2) Activation Phase

- Both players reveal the top card of their strategy decks.
- Compare the Strategy Rating on the cards revealed. The player with the lower Strategy Rating chooses whether they will go first or second. In the event of a draw both players roll a D6 and the high roller chooses who goes first. If both players roll the same number, roll again until one player rolls higher.
- The first player activates the Groups indicated on their Battlegroup card one-by-one in the order they choose and completes all of their actions.
- The second player then activates the Groups indicated on their Battlegroup card one-by-one and completes all of their actions.
- The Battlegroup cards are placed on the discard pile.
- Return to a). When both players have no Battlegroup cards left to reveal the game turn is over.

3) Roundup phase.

- Ground Combat.** Resolve any ground asset movement and combats (see Ground Combat on p55).
- Launch Assets.** Resolve any launch assets (see Launch Assets on p59)
- Damage Control.** Roll for damage control on ships suffering from ongoing crippling damage results (eg fires - see p49).
- Orbital Decay.** Resolve any orbital decay.
- Collect Victory Points** as indicated by the scenario being played (see p74).
- Remove any excess dice and tokens from the table.

Battlegroup cards and the strategy deck

The order that ships activate in is dictated by the owning player's strategy deck and this deck is made up of Battlegroup cards. A Battlegroup card might represent just a lone, powerful ship but more commonly it will comprise several Groups of ships.

At the start of each turn both players build their own strategy deck out of their force's available Battlegroup cards, stacking them in the order they intend them to be activated in over the course of the coming turn.



A player's number of available Battlegroup cards are determined when they pick their fleet (see p73 on preparing for battle). It can potentially be varied by circumstances like scenarios requiring reserve Battlegroups to be held off-table or casualties wiping out whole Battlegroups.

Strategy Rating

A Battlegroup card's Strategy Rating is used to determine which player's Battlegroup activates first. When the players reveal two opposing Battlegroup cards the Strategy Ratings on the cards are compared and the lower Strategy Rating can choose to activate before or after the Battlegroup with the higher Strategy Rating.

The Strategy Ratings for Battlegroup cards are determined by the Battlegroup's type and size, reflecting the fact that a small scouting group will be able to react more quickly than a heavy siege group. For details on making up your own Battlegroups (see the Battlegroup building rules and the fleet lists on p70).

Equal Strategy Ratings

If two battlegroup cards are revealed which have the same Strategy Rating both players roll a D6 and add their Admiral Value (see Admirals on p71), the player with the highest total chooses who goes first – If both players total is the same, roll again until one players total is higher.

Losing Battlegroups

When all of the ships in a Battlegroup have been destroyed or are off the table for any reason the corresponding Battlegroup card is removed from the player's strategy deck and put to one side. If you reveal a Battlegroup card that no longer has any ships remaining, remove it from your deck and reveal the next card.

Battlegroup activation sequence

When a Battlegroup's card is flipped all the groups in the Battlegroup proceed to activate one at a time in a sequence decided by the owning player. An active group must complete all of its moving, shooting and other actions before another group can activate.

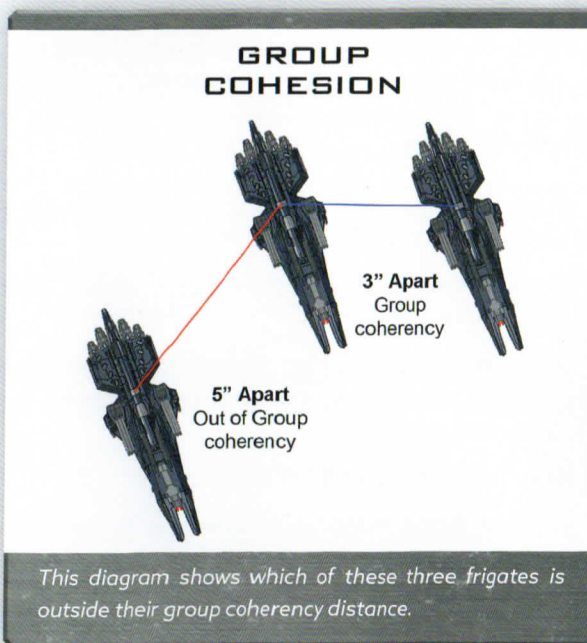
It isn't necessary for a player to nominate the sequence of group activation before starting. Players choose the first group to activate, complete all of its actions, and then chose the next, in any order they like (as which they choose may be determined by a previous Group's successes or failures!). Once all of the groups in the Battlegroup have activated the Battlegroup's actions are over for that turn.

Groups

All ships of the same class in a Battlegroup automatically form a group together.

For example a UCM Battlegroup could be comprised of six Toulon Class frigates, two Berlin Class cruisers and a Madrid Class cruiser.

It would therefore contain three groups; one comprising the six Toulons, one comprising two Berlins and one comprising the Madrid.



Ships in groups have to stay fairly close together so they can rapidly share combat information over secure links to instantly coordinate their actions and hinder enemy intelligence-gathering. Smaller ships with more limited communications gear and lower signature have to stay closer together to retain cohesion as a fighting unit and get the same benefits.

What that all means is that ships in the same group have to stay close to each other on the tabletop.

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 6 or less have a group coherency of 3".

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 7 or more have a group coherency of 6".

As with most of the distances in Dropfleet Commander, Coherency is measured from the centre of one model to the centre of another, with the centre being the stem of the flight stand.

Special rules can increase or decrease the standard coherency distances for group.

BATTEGROUP COHESION

The individual groups that make up a battlegroup are free to split up as much as they wish, but they avoid penalties to the battlegroup's overall effectiveness by staying closer together. When it comes to comparing Strategy Ratings, a battlegroup temporarily increases its Strategy Rating by one for each of its groups that is more than 12" away from any other group in the same battlegroup.

Special rules can increase or decrease the standard 12" coherency distance for battlegroups.

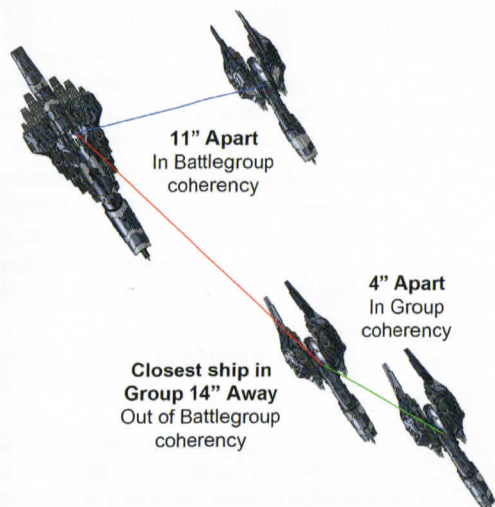
When a group activates the first ship in it can be moved freely (subject to the normal rules for movement). Each

subsequent ship in the group must end its movement within coherency range of at least one other ship in the group.

In the event that a ship finds itself outside coherency range (usually due to the group suffering casualties) it must move to be within coherency range of another ship from the group as soon as it has an opportunity to do so.

Some Groups have a special open coherency (most notably strike carriers and other troop deploying ships). These Ships do not have to maintain coherency and are not subject to either Battlegroup or Group coherency rules – they are effectively autonomous, though must still obey the rules for orders/special orders as their battlegroup.

BATTELGROUP COHESION



For example: The battlegroup shown to the left has one group outside of 12" coherency range so when comparing Strategy Rating's against an opposing battlegroup to see who can activate first this battlegroup's Strategy Rating counts one higher than normal.

ACTIVATING A GROUP

When a Group activates, all of the ships in it can move and shoot with one weapon system each by default. A Group completes its movement first and then shoots with any weapon systems at the end of its movement.

Special Orders

When a ship activates it can opt to use special orders to represent it diverting power and crew members to specific functions. Choose whether or not to have a ship on special orders before moving or shooting with it. There is no dice roll or check to use special orders, your highly trained crews will simply follow the order. Special orders allow ships to manoeuvre beyond their normal parameters, highlight enemy ships as targets or hide from them and, in what is often most popular option of all, to fire multiple weapon systems.

The various special orders have their own pros and cons so should be chosen carefully as a ship can still move and shoot just by using standard orders. One of the key features of using different orders is how much attention they will attract and how much they will degrade the normal performance of the ship. This is represented by status tokens as described later. Unless otherwise stated by a player, a ship will always be on standard orders. Also, on the turn a ship enters the battlefield it may choose any orders normally available to it.

Special orders for Battlegroups

All the ships in a battlegroup have to work together so only one 'special' order can be chosen each time the battlegroup activates. The individual ships in each of the battlegroup's groups can opt to use the battlegroup special order chosen for that turn or to use standard orders instead.

For example: A battlegroup comprising two groups of three ships each is activated and the owning player chooses 'Weapons Free' for the battlegroup's special orders. Any of the six ships in the battlegroup can opt to use Weapons Free orders this turn, any that do not do so use standard orders instead. In the next turn the owning player chooses 'Silent Running' special orders for the battlegroup. Once again the individual ships of the battlegroup can opt to use Silent Running or default to standard orders instead.

Group Cohesion

Ships outside their group cohesion range (see above) can only use standard orders.

PASSIVE COUNTERMEASURES / SHIELDS UP!

Passive Countermeasures work in a variety of different ways for different races. Some are all encompassing energy bubbles that offer staunch defence against all attacks, while others are only in use to protect certain key areas of a ship, making them less effective overall.

In game terms this means that some (usually the less powerful) Passive Countermeasures may be constantly in use, whereas very strong versions require the player to choose to deploy them or not (as they will often have negative tactical effects as well).

Players must choose to raise shields at the same time that special orders are chosen for a Battlegroup. Each ship can opt to use Passive Countermeasures or not, and if used they will remain operative until the ship's next activation in the following turn. Mark ships using Passive Countermeasures with tokens. Keep in mind that raising shields will often have negative tactical effects as well as the positives of Passive Countermeasures.

ENERGY SPIKES

Certain events cause Energy Spikes to be placed on ships to mark their current status. Energy spikes represent all kinds of different events that assist the enemy in accurately targeting the ship – engine usage, weapons fire, even leaks caused by damage or enemy ships actively scanning for the vessel. Energy spikes come in two types; Minor and Major.

- A Minor energy spike increases the ship's Signature characteristic by 6 until it is removed.
- A Major energy spike increases the ship's Signature characteristic by 12 until it is removed.

A ship only has one Spike at a time. If a ship already has a Minor Spike and it gets a second one, it turns it into a Major Spike. If a ship already has a Major Spike token it is lit up like a proverbial Christmas tree and doesn't receive any further spikes until the Major Spike has been removed or reduced to a Minor Spike.

For example; A ship with a Signature of 6 gains a Minor Spike. Its Signature will count as 12 until the Spike is removed. If the ship gains another Minor Spike it becomes a Major Spike and the ship counts as Signature 18 until the Spike is removed.

Gaining Spikes

Hard turning or using high thrust can add a Spike to a ship, but far and away the most common source is firing weapon systems. See the special order rules for more details.

Removing Spikes

Using Silent Running special orders will remove all Spikes on a ship as noted shortly. A ship on standard orders removes a Minor Spike at the beginning of its activation or reduces a Major Spike to a Minor as applicable.

Tracking Spikes

Use the status wheel on a ship's base to track its energy spikes, turning the wheel as appropriate when spikes are gained or lost. Players may use a marker to represent these if they wish.




DROPFLEET BASES

KEY




1: Fixed Outer Bezzel
(Coloured indicator sticker in centre)

2: Rotating Inner Wheel
Easy grip to turn wheel without touching the model

3: Ship Status Indicator

Major Spike 
Minor Spike 
Silent Running 
Standard 

4: Orbital Layer Indicator

High Orbit 
Low Orbit 
Atmosphere 

NB: any layer can be indicated in combination with any ship status

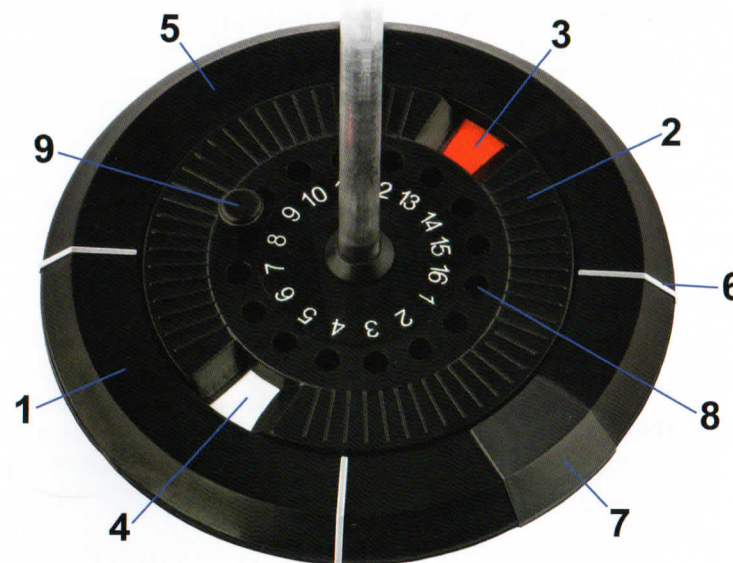
5: Space for ship name sticker
(Blanks and pre-set names provided)

6: Embossed Fire Arcs
- Also used for turning (painting optional)

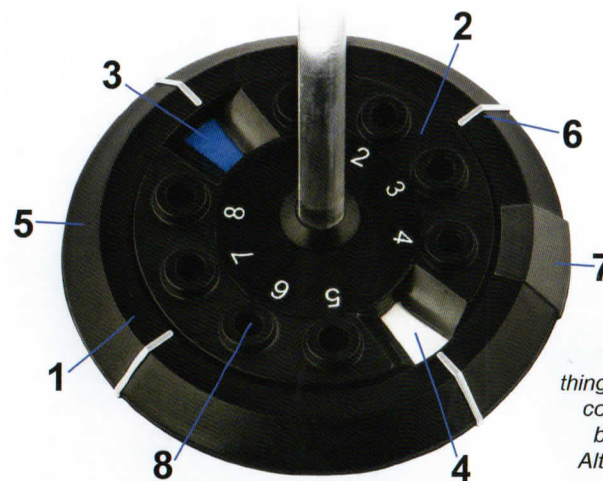
7: Embossed Narrow Fire Arc
(Painting optional)

8: Damage Inflicted Marker
- Numbers applied as a glossy sticker
- Damage marked with a peg (9 - optional)

These damage pegs can also be used to indicate other things. Four are provided with each base, so it's possible to colour code them and interchange them. A red peg could be used to indicate that the ship is crippled for example. Alternatively, a range of colours could be used to indicate which battlegroup the ship belongs to.



LARGE BASE



SMALL BASE

SHIP'S ORDERS

Standard orders

The ship may turn by up to 45 degrees at the beginning of its movement. It may also fire up to one weapon system. Remove a Minor Spike from the ship at the end of its activation.

Weapons free

The ship may not turn but it may fire any number of weapon systems. Add a Major Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Station Keeping

The ship may use from none to half of its Thrust to move, turn by up to 45 degrees at the beginning or end of its movement and fire up to one weapon system. Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Course Change

The ship may turn up to 45 degrees twice at any point in its movement and fire up to one weapon system. Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Max Thrust

The ship may turn up to 45 degrees at the beginning of its movement and use up to double its normal amount of Thrust. It may not fire any weapon systems. Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Silent Running

The ship may not turn and may not fire. Remove all energy spikes from the ship at the end of its activation. The ship's Signature is reduced to 0 until the start of its next activation. Use the status wheel on the ship's base to indicate that it is silent running.

Note that, ships on Silent Running or Max Thrust orders may not use launch assets.

Active Scan

The ship may not turn and may fire up to one weapon system. Also place a Minor Spike on any one enemy ship on the tabletop. Add a Major Spike to the ship at the end of its activation. Ships in Atmosphere and/or with less than 4 hull points on their starting profile may not use this order. Only one ship per Group may use this order. Active Scan may be used against an enemy ship on Silent Running special orders as detailed below.

ACTIVE SCAN VERSUS SILENT RUNNING

A ship using Active Scan can attempt to reveal a ship that is Silent Running, although success is by no means assured. Roll a die for the Active Scanning ship, on a 4+ the Silent Runner is spotted - reset the status wheel to show that its normal Signature applies. In this case no additional energy spike is added to the revealed ship although subsequent Active Scans or effects that add spikes will add the appropriate spike level.

A NOTE ON POINT DEFENCE AND CLOSE ACTION WEAPON SYSTEMS

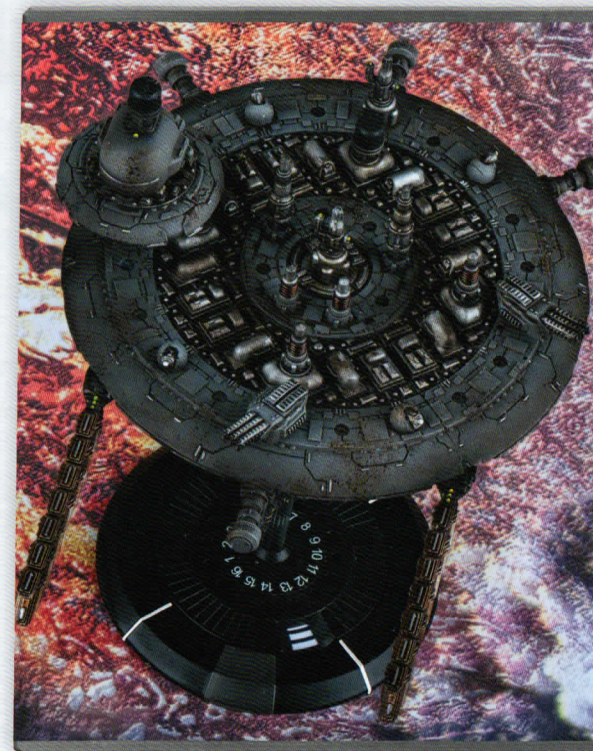
Point Defence and Close Action weapon systems have a short effective range but they are fast firing and require small amounts of energy to use.

Close Action weapon systems can always be fired in addition to any other weapon systems permitted by a ship's orders. If a ship may not fire weapon systems it may not fire its close action weapon systems either.

Point Defence is always active even when the ship may not fire any other weapon systems.

ORDERS SUMMARY

ORDERS	TURN?	FIRE?	THRUST	SPIKE?
STANDARD ORDERS	YES	UP TO ONE	HALF TO FULL	REMOVE MINOR
SILENT RUNNING	NO	NONE	HALF TO FULL	REMOVE MAJOR
WEAPONS FREE	NO	ALL	HALF TO FULL	ADD MAJOR
STATION KEEPING	YES	UP TO ONE	UP TO HALF	ADD MINOR
COURSE CHANGE	2x	UP TO ONE	HALF TO FULL	ADD MINOR
MAX THRUST	YES	NONE	FULL TO DOUBLE	ADD MINOR
ACTIVE SCAN	NO	UP TO ONE	HALF TO FULL	ADD MAJOR



MOVEMENT

When a group activates all of the ships in it can move. A group does not have to maintain a specific formation when it moves and each ship can move individually. For a move to be legal all of the Group's ships must obey the coherency rules at the end of their movement. Any ships outside group coherency when they activate will not be able to benefit from the battlegroup's special orders.

Thrust

A ship can move across the tabletop a distance up to its Thrust characteristic in inches in a straight line. To represent mass and momentum a ship must normally use at least half of its available Thrust (rounding up) to move each time it activates.

Station Keeping orders

A ship using Station Keeping orders may use up to half of its Thrust to move. It can remain entirely stationary, if desired, and still turn on the spot.

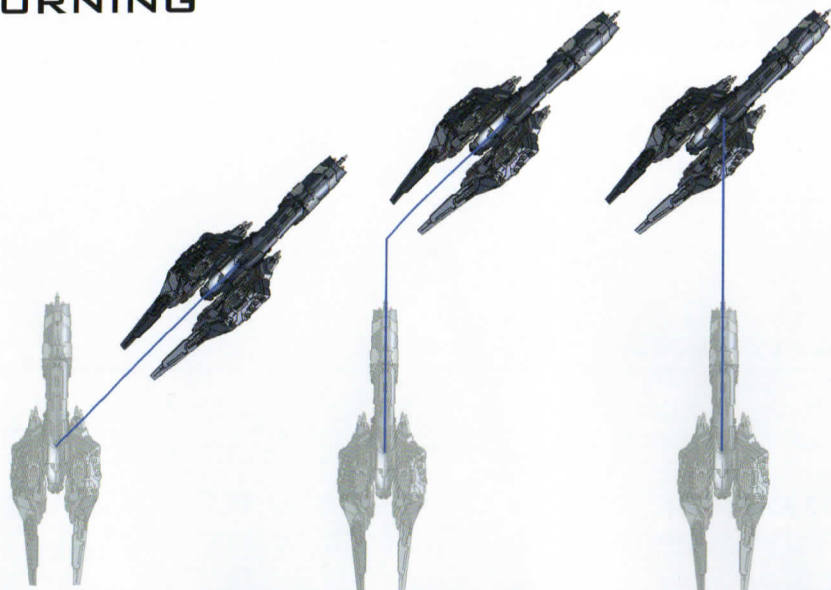
Turning

A ship may normally make a single turn of up to 45 degrees at the beginning of its movement. Using special orders changes this as follows;

Ships on Silent Running, Active Scan or Weapons free special orders may not turn at all.

Ships on Course Change special orders may turn twice at any point in their movement and may combine them into a single turn of up to 90 degrees instead of 45 degrees.

TURNING



Examples; A ship performing a 45 degree turn in different ways; partway through its move, at the end of its move and at the beginning of its move. Normally ship may only turn at the beginning of its movement so the other turns could only be performed using Course Change special orders.

RAMMING

With the vast speeds involved in space travel, when two objects collide it mostly results in both objects being obliterated. With this in mind, even the most insane or bloodthirsty captains will avoid ramming their ship into another for risk of both being consumed in the inevitable explosion. However, in certain circumstances, when there is nothing else to loose, incredibly desperate captains have been known to rush dangerously close towards the enemy in the hopes of taking them with them. In such circumstances it is often the close range exchanges of weapon systems or the critical overloading of the ships jump drives that do the most damage, on rare occasions though the doomed ship will manage to make contact with their target, frequently consuming both in the destructive energies unleashed.

Only large ships have the mass to survive the desperate defensive fire thrown up by the enemy ship and as such, only ships of medium tonnage or larger may attempt this manoeuvre. As a captain must be desperate to attempt such an action his ship must abide by the following criteria. The ship must have two or fewer Hull Points remaining, must choose Standard Orders this turn and may not fire. If the ship ends its activation within 3" of an enemy ship it may attempt to ram them. Roll a dice, on a 1-2 the attempt has failed and the enemy ship succeeds in destroying the Ramming ship, remove the ship from play and do not roll for Catastrophic Damage. On the roll of a 3+ the Ramming action is a success and they have successfully crashed into/detonated their jump drives/unleashed a devastating final volley. Remove the Ramming ship and do not roll on the Catastrophic Damage table. The target ship takes a number of Lock 3+ hits equal to the Ramming ship's original Hull value.

FIRING

Once a group has moved all of its ships may fire weapon systems if their orders permit them to do so.

Firing Procedure

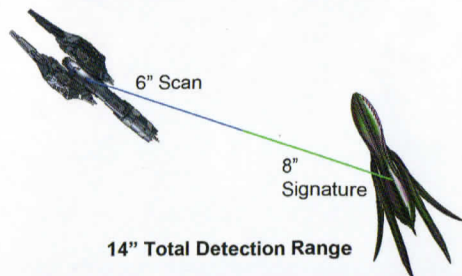
1. Check detection range and arc.
2. Allocate Attack dice.
3. Roll to hit.
4. Total up Hull damage inflicted.
5. Roll saving throws and deduct Hull points.
6. Roll for crippling damage if Hull is reduced to 50% or less.
7. Roll for catastrophic damage effects if Hull is reduced to 0 or less.

1. Check Detection Range and Firing Arc

The range a ship can 'see' a target at is equal to the target's Signature characteristic plus the firing ship's Scan characteristic.

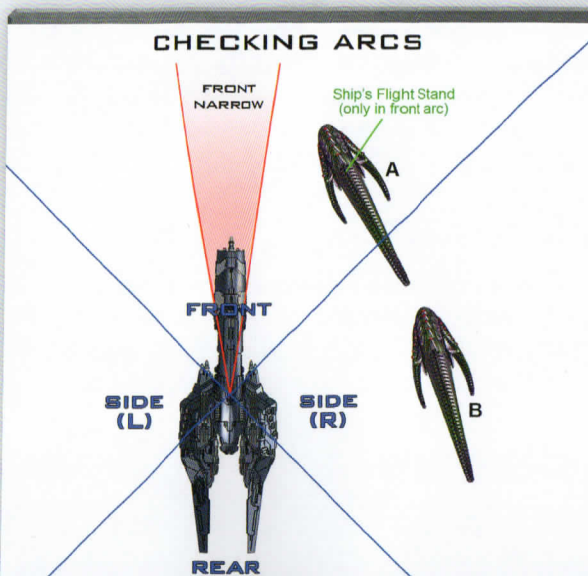
Keep in mind that Spike status considerably increases a ship's Signature (by 6"/12" for Minor/Major Spikes).

DETECTION RANGE



For example; The firing ship has a Scan of 6, the desired target has a Signature of 8 and is 12" away. Scan 6 + Signature 8 = 14" so the target ship is visible and can be fired upon.

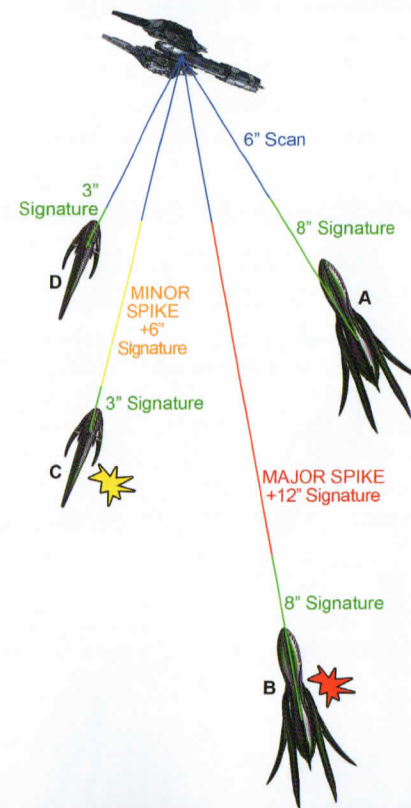
If a target can be detected it can potentially be hit by the firing ship's weapon systems that can be brought to bear. Look at the weapon system's Arc characteristic in the firing ship's description and use the handy guide provided (arcs on base) to check if it is within arc of any potential targets.



For example; Enemy ship A is within the firing ship's front arc and can be fired at with weapon systems with an 'F' Arc. Enemy ship B is in the firing ship's side arc and can be fired at with weapon systems with a 'S/R' Arc.

As orbital space is three dimensional, and because of the ability to see all other models as stated above, ships do not block each other from shooting other ships - this applies even if on the table top they may appear to be hiding behind each other or unable to actually 'see' the other ship.

SPIKES AND RANGE



Another example; The firing ship (blue) has a Scan value of 6 and several potential targets. Cruiser A has a Signature of 8" so it can be fired at if it is up to 14" away. Cruiser B also has a Signature of 8" but it has a Major energy Spike so it is currently counting as Signature 20" (8 + 12 for the Major Spike), meaning it can be fired on if it is up to 26" away. Frigate C has a Minor Spike adding 6" to its basic Signature of 3" so it is a potential target up to 15" away. Frigate D has no Spikes so only its Signature of 3" is added to the firing ship's Scan, meaning it can only be targeted if it is up 9" away from the firing ship.

2. Allocate attack dice

Ships may only fire one weapon system at one target, they may not split their dice over multiple targets. When rolling for several weapon systems with different characteristics at once it can be helpful to use different coloured dice to represent the different weapon systems instead of rolling each one separately.

ALLOCATING ATTACK DICE

A: Can be hit by front arc (F) weapon (3 dice) and Front/Side arc (F/S) weapon (3 dice)

3/6 Attack Dice

B: Can be hit by Front/Side arc (F/S) weapon (3 dice) only

0/3 Attack Dice

FRONT

SIDE (R)

For example; this cruiser has two otherwise identical weapon systems with three Attack dice each, but one has arc F so it is Front facing, the other weapon system has an Arc of F/S so it is Front and Side facing. The cruiser could therefore allocate either three or six Attack dice against the enemy in front of it, but only up to three Attack dice against the enemy to its side.

Some weapon systems roll a random number of Attack Dice (i.e. D6 or D3) that is determined each time they shoot. Roll to see how many Attack Dice the weapon system generates before allocating them to available targets.

An active Group will usually contain multiple ships with weapon systems to fire. All of a Group's Attack Dice must be allocated between the available targets before any rolls to hit are made. This helps to speed up game play and prevents the firing player from excessively optimising their shooting in an unrealistic fashion.

3. Roll to hit

Each weapon system has characteristics that specify its Lock number and Attack Dice in the ship description. The Attack dice is the number of dice that are rolled and the Lock number is the number that has to be equalled or exceeded in order to score a hit.

CRITICAL HITS

Any Attack Dice which scores two or more higher than the weapon system's Lock number is considered to have scored a 'critical hit'. The Hull damage caused by that Attack Dice ignores the target's Armour saving throw altogether.

For example, if a weapon system has a Lock roll of 4+ any Attack Dice that roll 6 will ignore the target's Armour saving throw and be applied directly to the target's Hull. A weapon system with a Lock roll of 3+ would ignore Armour saves on rolls of 5 or 6 and so on.

Passive Countermeasures

As mentioned previously, ships using Passive Countermeasures can still attempt to save against critical hits using their additional Armour value.

4. Total up Hull damage inflicted

Every Attack Dice that equals or exceeds its Lock number inflicts the number of Damage points indicated for the weapon system. Commonly this is one point of Hull damage per Attack Dice but particularly destructive weapons may inflict more.

For example; A ship's description includes a rail gun battery with a Lock of 4+, 3 Attack and 1 Damage. This means that when the weapon system is fired three dice are rolled and each one scores a hit on roll of 4, 5 or 6. Each hit scored by the rail gun battery inflicts 1 Hull damage on the target.

Some weapon system are unpredictable and will inflict a variable number of damage points on each hit scored (e.g. D6, D6+1 etc.). Roll any additional dice needed to determine the actual amount of damage inflicted before any Armour saving throws are made.



5. Roll Armour saving throws and deduct Hull points

When a ship suffers Hull damage its Passive countermeasures (if it has any) and Armour may be able to prevent the damage being applied.

Roll a D6 for each point of Hull damage inflicted and compare it to the Armour saving throw shown in the ship's description. Any D6 that scores equal to or above the ship's indicated saving throw for Armour blocks one point of damage so that it has no effect.

When a ship has more than one saving throw, players choose the best applicable save and compare their roll to this. This most often occurs with Passive Countermeasures, where a ship's save stat includes both hull and Passive Countermeasures.

e.g. A ship has a 3+/4+ save. It receives five hits – three are normal hits, and the remaining two are critical hits. The ship's owner rolls three dice needing 3+ for the normal hits, as this is their best save. They cannot take normal saves against the critical hits, but may take Passive Countermeasure saves, so they roll the remaining two save needing 4+, as this is the best save they can take against these hits.

Any unsaved damage will remove Hull points from the target ship. Track the Hull damage lost by ships by using the damage wheel on the model's base, counters or dice. Ships that have no Hull points left are destroyed and must roll for catastrophic damage to see how fiery their demise is.



POINT DEFENCE (PD)

Ships usually have their Point Defence as another line of defence to specifically protect them against damage inflicted by Strike Craft and Close Action weapon systems. When a ship receives damage from these sources roll a number of dice equal to the ship's PD characteristic. Each Point Defence dice that succeeds in scoring a 5 or 6 will block one point of Hull Damage before Armour saves are taken.

Critical hits can be stopped by Point Defence but each point of critical hit damage blocked takes two Point Defence successes instead of one.

For example; A cruiser with a PD characteristic of 6 is attacked and suffers four normal points of Hull damage and two points of critical Hull damage from Close Action weapon systems. Rolling six dice for Point Defence it gets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. – two successes. The ship's Point Defence can stop two points of ordinary Hull damage or one of the points of critical Hull damage.

Point Defence and Passive Countermeasures

Many ships with Passive Countermeasures running cannot use Point Defence – this is detailed in their special rules where applicable.

6. Roll for Crippling Damage

When a ship has lost a cumulative total of more 50% or more of its starting Hull points it suffers what is called 'Crippling Damage'. This is a one-time check to represent major systems taking too much punishment, minor systems shorting out and continuous battle damage taking its toll on the vessel. When a ship experiences Crippling Damage, roll a D6 and consult the table below to see where the Crippling Damage has occurred, and then roll a second D6 on the appropriate sub-table to discover the result. Ships with a starting hull value of less than 4 are never subject to being Crippled and do not roll on the on the Crippling Damage tables.

Extra damage results and Armour saving throws

Many Crippling Damage results inflict additional Hull damage on the ship. Armour saving throws never apply against Crippling Damage as it represents the ship suffering internal collapses, cascade failures and systems quite literally melting down. It's worth noting that smaller ships like frigates are quite likely to be destroyed outright by Crippling Damage.

D6 roll	Damage location
1-2	Subsystems
3-4	Hull
5-6	Core Systems

1-2 Subsystems

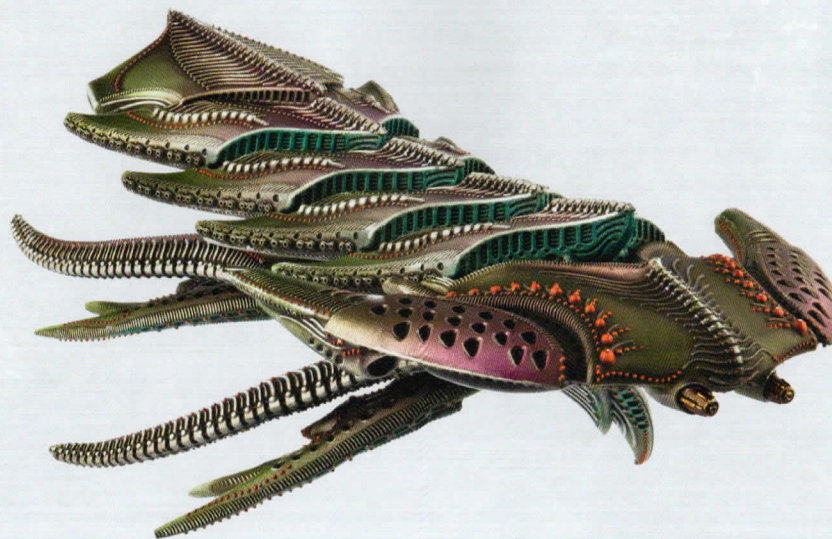
D6 roll	Damage results
1-2	Bright flash... and nothing else: The ship has a lucky escape. Place a <u>Minor Spike</u> on the ship. If the ship was using Silent Running special orders it loses the benefits and the ship's Signature is returned to normal. In this case, no further spike is added.
3-4	Fire: A fire breaks out. The fire will inflict 1 additional point of Hull damage in each Roundup Phase if it is not successfully 'repaired' (i.e. extinguished).
5-6	Energy Surges: The ship suffers 2 additional points of Hull damage. In addition, power transfer and communications are badly disrupted so the ship may not use special orders until the Energy Surges are repaired. The ship also becomes subject to Orbital Decay.

3-4 Hull

D6 roll	Damage results
1-2	Scanners Offline: The ship's Scan characteristic is reduced to 1 until the scanners have been repaired.
3-4	Armour Cracked: The ship suffers 2 additional points of Hull damage. Additionally, the Armour Value suffers a +2 modifier for the rest of the game. This damage cannot be repaired.
5-6	Hull Breach: The ship suffers 2 additional points of Hull damage. The ship also becomes subject to Orbital Decay.

5-6 Core systems

D6 roll	Damage results
1-2	Engines Disabled: The ship suffers 2 additional points of Hull damage. The ship's Thrust characteristic is reduced by 50% rounded up until the damage is repaired. The ship may not turn or change orbit until the engines are repaired. The ship also becomes subject to Orbital Decay.
3-4	Weapons Offline: The ship suffers 3 additional points of hull damage. The next time this ship activates it may not fire any weapons or use any launch assets. In subsequent activations it may fire and launch assets as normal.
5-6	Reactor Overload: The ship suffers 3 additional points of Hull damage. Then roll again on the Crippling Damage Table. The ship also becomes subject to Orbital Decay.



Damage control

Roll a D6 for each crippling damage effect that requires repair in the Roundup Phase of the game turn. On a roll of 4, 5 or 6 the effect is repaired and no longer needs to be rolled for, on a roll of 2 or 3 the effect remains and must be rolled for again next Roundup phase. On a 1 the damage is not repaired as for a 2-3 result and the ship suffers one additional point of Hull damage. Armour and Passive Countermeasures cannot prevent Hull damage from this source.

Damage control table

D6 roll	Result
1	The ship suffers one point of Hull damage (no saves) and the Crippling Damage is not repaired. Roll again for repair at the end of the next game turn.
2-3	Crippling Damage is not repaired. Roll again for repair at the end of the next game turn.
4-6	The Crippling Damage is repaired and has no further effect.

7. Roll for Catastrophic Damage

When a ship has no Hull points remaining it is destroyed by Catastrophic Damage. Roll a D6 on the table to the right to see if its destruction has any additional effects that apply to other ships nearby. Larger ships tend to go with a bigger bang so add +1 to the roll if the Ship had a starting Hull characteristic of 10 or more. Ships with a starting hull value of less than 4 are simply removed from play- do not roll on this table.

Explosion range

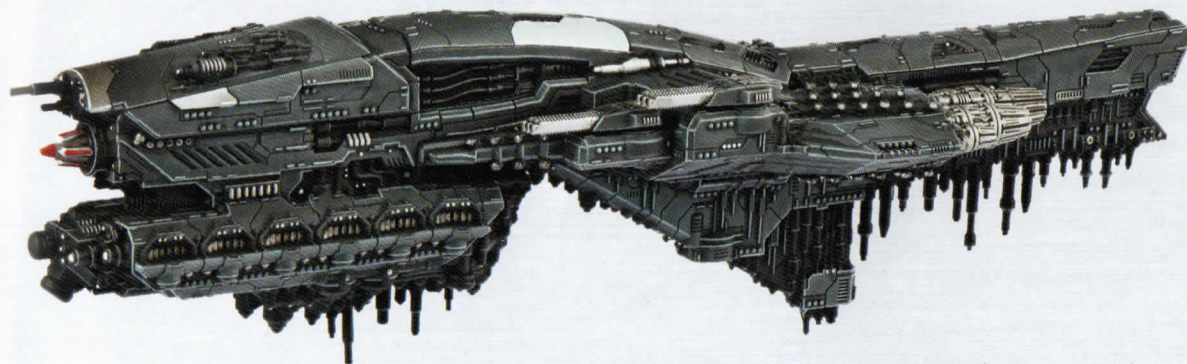
Most Catastrophic Damage results can cause a ship to explode in some fashion. The size of the explosion is determined by the starting Hull size of the ship. Note that the explosion only ever effects ships on the same Orbital Layer as the destroyed ship. Ships in Atmosphere are simply removed from play – do not roll on this table.

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 6 or less explode with a D3" radius.

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 7 or more explode with a D6" radius.

Catastrophic damage modifiers summary

Ship with starting Hull of 10 or more: +1



D6 roll	Result
1-2	Burn up: The ship is wrecked and falls slowly away into the nearest gravity well where it will eventually burn up in an uncontrolled descent. There are no additional effects.
3	Blazing Wreck: The ship is spectacularly immolated by raging internal fires. All other ships within explosion range gain a <u>Minor Spike</u> from the reflected thermal radiation and any that are using Silent Running special orders lose the benefits and have their Signature returned to normal. In this case, no further spike is added.
4	Shredded: The ship is torn apart by successive blows. All other ships within explosion range suffer 1 point of Hull damage from the rapidly expanding cloud of debris. An Armour save (including Passive Countermeasures) can be made against the damage as normal.
5	Explosion: The ship is destroyed in a sudden, massive explosion. Any other ships within explosion range suffer 2 points of Hull damage from shockwaves and flying debris. Armour saves (including Passive Countermeasures) can be made against the damage as normal.
6	Radiation burst: The ship's drives detonate in a lethal flash of hard radiation. Any other ships within explosion range suffer 2 Hull damage from the deadly radiation bombardment. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may not be taken against this damage.
7+	Distortion bubble: The ship undergoes an uncontrolled reactor event. Any other ships within explosion range suffer D6 Hull damage from the backlash. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may not be taken against this damage.

"Behold, Battlefleet Eden. The greatest force ever assembled by human artifice. Vengeance will fall at the hand of this mighty and unsubtle blade. By our rifles and blood shall the ground be taken, but by its power and steel shall the sky be ours." **Supreme Marshal Yuri T. Zachiev, 2670**

ORBITAL COMBAT

So far the rules have covered the very basic elements of Dropfleet Commander. However the main aim of the game is to invade and conquer/liberate the planets that players the fleets are fighting over. This is achieved with troops on the ground, and the next section explains the mechanics of deploying these troops, bombarding key areas from orbit and how ships interact with the planet's surface.

Note:

All of the elements mentioned above are central to the game, and Dropfleet Commander is not designed to be played without them. i.e. in deep space with no objectives or context. However new players may find it useful to choose to start with a very small game just using the rules for inter-ship combat to get used to the way those mechanics work before diving into the orbital combat rules.

OVERVIEW

The basic Dropfleet rules cover fighting in space, but the truth is that battles out in the void between stars are rare events. The true prize in any interstellar conflict is gaining control of the planets in a solar system. Because of this the majority of combat between ships occurs in close proximity to a habitable (or at least colonisable) planet, moon or comparable celestial body.

Once an enemy fleet moves in to try to knock down satellite coverage and bombard targets on the surface it is only a matter of time before a full-blown invasion will be launched. This is the point where a defending fleet is forced to stand and fight or surrender control of the planet altogether.

ORBITAL LAYERS

There are three 'heights' or layers in orbital combat, with the table surface nominally representing ground level and ships floating somewhere in the layers above. The three layers are indicated on a base as shown below:



High Orbit/Space



Low Orbit



Atmosphere/
Ground

High Orbit/Space

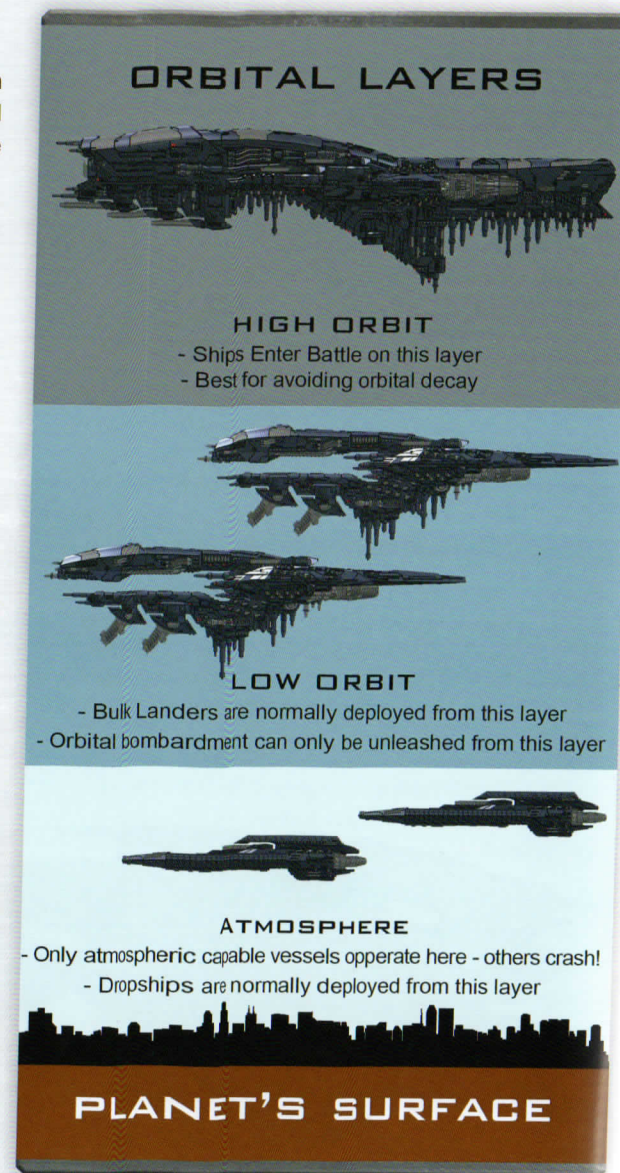
Combat is rare in actual deep space but common in high orbit. Most large ships are designed to operate at this level, and as such are most effective in High orbit. Severe damage when at lower orbital layers is liable to cause Orbital Decay, a situation that can very easily become terminal for such large vessels.

Low Orbit

The exact parameters for what constitutes Low Orbit can vary a lot from planet to planet depending on composition and atmosphere. This 'interface' layer is the most common battleground for ships as attacking ships must come down to Low Orbit at some point to launch an invasion force, bombard the surface, and claim key orbits.

Atmosphere

Few ships are Atmosphere-capable, and even Strike Craft or munitions have to be specially configured to operate in Atmosphere without burning up on entry. However, to conquer a planet the invading force must enter Atmosphere in order to make a landing.



Limitations in Atmosphere

The planetary Atmosphere may only be entered by ships designated as Atmospheric in their special rules. Any other ships are destroyed on entry. Ships in Atmosphere have their available Thrust reduced to 2". Ships moving into Atmosphere therefore lose any remaining movement apart from this 2".

e.g. a ship has a thrust of 10. It moves 4" in low orbit, then chooses to drop to Atmosphere. Normally it would have 6" of movement left, however it is now in Atmosphere, so this is reduced to 2".

Ships moving out of Atmosphere into Low Orbit must do so at the start of their movement, and follow the rules for moving up an Orbital Layer and do not suffer this penalty. (see Moving between Orbital Layers).

Moving between orbital layers

A ship may move voluntarily up or down one orbital layer (e.g. from High Orbit to Low Orbit, or Atmosphere to Low Orbit) as a part of its movement, once per turn. However, it must be able to turn to do so. This means that ships that have Weapons Free, Active Scan or Silent Running special orders on them or ships that cannot turn for any other reason may not change Orbital Layers.

Ships may go down an Orbital Layer at any point in their movement for no penalty to their movement (other than those associated with going into Atmosphere - see the Atmosphere rule above). A ship must expend 4" of its available Thrust to move up an Orbital Layer. A ship that does not have 4" of Thrust available may not move up a layer.



Orbital Decay

Ships in Dropfleet Commander are highly advanced compared to their 21st century counterparts. The necessities of geostationary and geosynchronous orbits are relics of the past, seen as antiquated and even quaint. Modern fleets are all equipped with gravity nullifiers in addition to powerful often multidirectional engines and thrusters. Supremely well adapted to orbital combat, it requires huge levels of damage to threaten any ship with falling into a planet's gravity well.

Any Orbital Decay result on the Crippling Damage chart does just that. Gravity nullifiers are wrecked, thrusters are severely damaged and manoeuvring engines are offline.

Several Crippling Damage results make a ship subject to Orbital Decay. This means that the ship must make an extra damage control test in the Roundup Phase. If the test is failed by rolling a 1, 2 or 3 the ship immediately moves down one Orbital layer. Worse still, it remains subject to Orbital Decay and must test again in the next and all subsequent Roundup Phases until the test is passed.

A roll of 1 also inflicts one point of Hull damage on the ship due to the stresses incurred. On a roll of 4, 5 or 6 the crisis is averted and the ship no longer has to roll for Orbital Decay.

Any ship that does not have the Atmospheric Rule that moves into atmosphere because of Orbital Decay is Destroyed - Remove it from play without rolling on the Catastrophic damage table.

Shooting between Orbital Layers

A ship firing from one Orbital Layer to another suffers a +1 penalty to its weapon's Lock value (i.e. 4+ Lock becomes 5+).

"Coming up to them, there has passed some common shot between some of our fleet and some of them; and as far as we perceive, they are determined to sell their lives with blows."

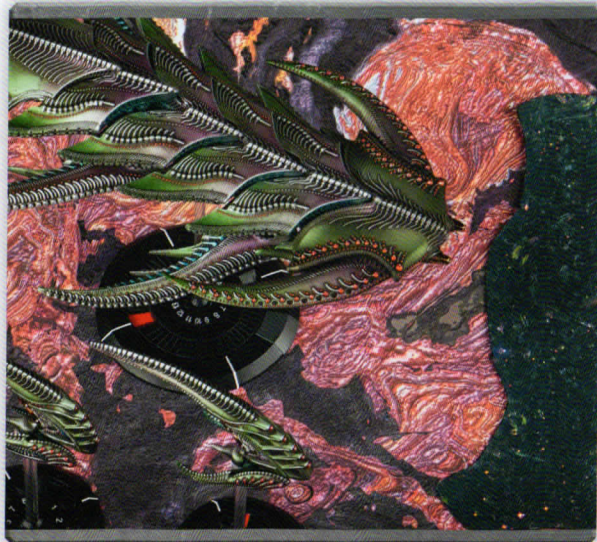
Vice Admiral Sir Francis Drake, 1588

SHOOTING THROUGH ATMOSPHERE

The difficulty of shooting between Orbital Layers is compounded when shooting through Atmosphere, where firing anything from a laser to a mass driver becomes highly inaccurate as energy bleeds off and is lost, plasma disperses etc. Targeting and effectively damaging ships or cities in Atmosphere is roughly analogous to hitting an object at the bottom of a slime filled pond.

For this reason, unless a weapon system is specifically designed to attack such enemies, any weapon system firing through (into or out of) Atmosphere has its lock value changed to 6+ regardless of any other modifiers. In addition to this, when firing through Atmosphere, detection range is limited to the firer's Scan value. Signature and energy spikes are ignored. Close Action weapons may not fire through Atmosphere.

Certain rules such as Bombardment, Air-to-Air etc. override the penalties for shooting through orbital layers; these are covered in the special rules section or in individual ship entries.



Orbital layer summary

- +1 to Lock per layer for shooting between layers.
- Going down a layer costs 0 Thrust, going up a layer costs 4" of Thrust. A ship must be able to turn in order to change layers.

Atmosphere summary

- Firing a weapon system through Atmosphere, the weapon systems lock value changes to 6+
- Close Action weapons may not be fired through Atmosphere
- Detection range is reduced to Scan when firing through Atmosphere
- Available Thrust is limited to 2" while in Atmosphere.
- Leaving Atmosphere costs 4" of Thrust.

MOVING THROUGH DEBRIS

If shooting through this Dense Debris Field, a ship here suffers a 2+ penalty to its weapon's Lock values and a -12" modifier (to a minimum of 0") to its Scan value

Ship receives two Lock 2+ hits here (if destroyed, it is destroyed here)

Dense Debris Field

If the ship survives, it completes its move

ORBITAL DEBRIS

Orbiting every inhabited planet are many thousands of objects ranging from space junk and wreckage through to satellites and mighty bastions of defence and commerce. The Reconquest in particular has left many planets with vast areas of its orbital layers covered in the wreckage and remains from hundreds of ships and other structures, making it dangerous to navigate! In Dropfleet Commander these areas and obstacles are grouped into three distinct categories; Debris Fields, Planetary Rings and Large Solid Objects. Each have their own rules and effects on the battlefield, each scenario will list which Orbital Debris are in use and their location upon the battlefield.

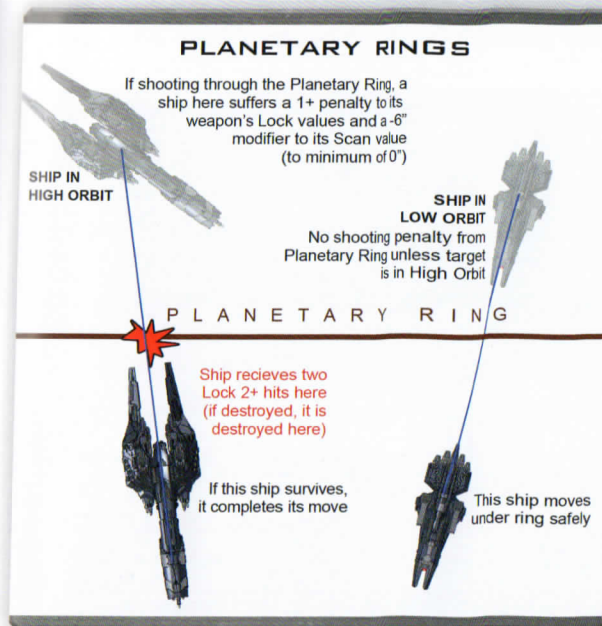
Debris Fields

There are two types of Debris Field in Dropfleet Commander, Fine and Dense. These fields are typically 6" by 3" but feel free to make the fields as large as you dare! When Debris Fields are placed on the battlefield they are considered to be in both High and Low Orbit, any ship that moves or turns within a field will receive damage from the various objects, resolve the damage as soon as the ship moves or turns within the field. Only roll once per ship per field per turn – if a ship moves through multiple fields in the same turn then roll separately for each. Ships shooting at a target through/in the field have the Lock of their weapon systems modified and their scan values reduced (to a minimum of 0") due to the debris. If the target is obscured by over 6" of Debris Field(s), then they are considered out of range and no weapon systems may be fired against them.

Debris Field	Damage to Ships Entering			Penalty to Lock	Penalty to Scan
	Lock	Attack	Damage		
Fine	3+	2	1	+1	-6"
Dense	2+	2	1	+2	-12"

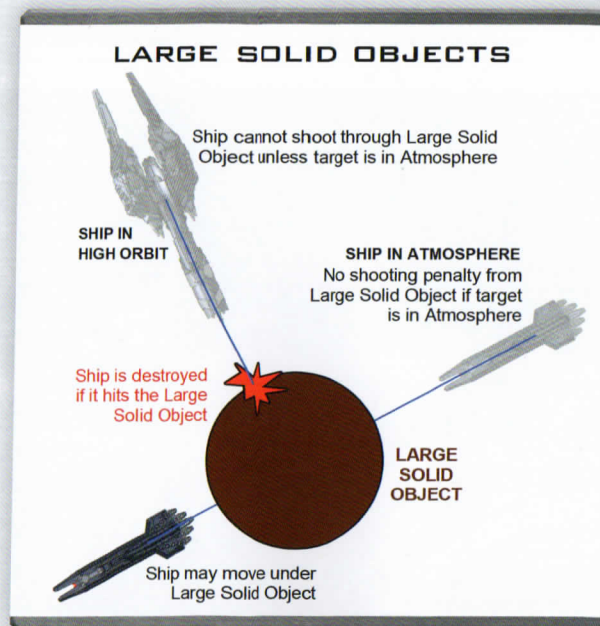
Planetary Ring

Planetary Rings are vast celestial phenomena that surround many planets. In game terms they are represented by an infinitely thin line that crosses the battlefield. They are only in high orbit so ships may drop to low orbit or atmosphere to avoid their effects. A Planetary Ring reduces the scan of any ship attempting to fire a weapon system through it by 6" and increases the weapon systems Lock by +1.



Large Solid Objects (LSOs)

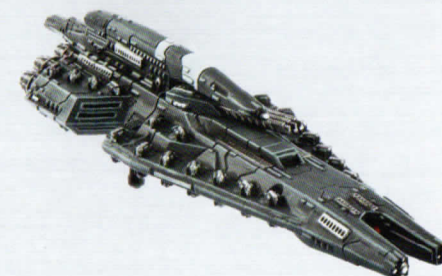
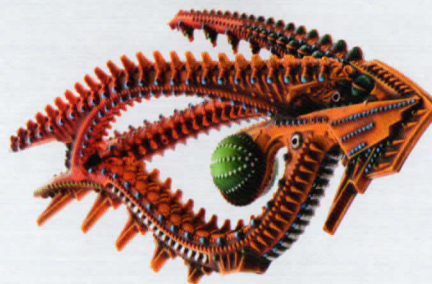
These are most commonly large asteroids or even small moons. They should be approximately 2" to 6" in radius and occupy both High and Low Orbit. LSOs completely block the line of sight for any ship attempting to fire through them and if a ship or token would move over any part of the LSO they are removed from play.



Orbital Debris and Launch Assets

Launch Assets (see page 59) are just as vulnerable to the effects of Orbital Debris as ships and as such the following rules apply. If a Launch Asset is moved through a Fine Debris Field it is removed on the roll of a 3+, and if it moves through a Dense Debris Field it is removed on the roll of a 5+, roll once per token.

If a ship with Launch Asset tokens on it enters any Debris Field, roll immediately to see if the tokens are removed (then roll to damage the ship as normal).



"It follows then as certain as that night succeeds the day, that without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honourable and glorious."

President George Washington, 1781

SPACE STATIONS

In Dropfleet Commander we refer to these constructs large enough to interact with as 'Space Stations'. For simplicities sake we group these into three categories: Small, Medium and Large. Space Stations are treated as ships in game (in that they can be targeted etc) although they do not move and follow the exceptions below.

Space Stations in Game

All Space Stations use the following rules when used in game as fleets fight for control of these vast structures.

Orbital Layer: Space Stations are always deployed in Low Orbit unless stated otherwise in the Scenario and may not change Orbital Layer.

Damage: Due to their size Space Stations can absorb substantial damage before being destroyed. The table on the right shows the characteristics of the Space Stations as similar to ships. They do not suffer Crippling Damage and when they are reduced to 0 Hull points they are removed from play along with any Ground Asset tokens on board, they do not roll for Catastrophic Damage.

Weapons: Many Space Stations come equipped with military grade defences to protect them from a multitude of threats. A Space Station can have any number of weapon systems mounted on it but the scenario will dictate which weapon systems, if any, a Space Station has. These weapons may be fired by the Controlling Player at the start of the Launch Assets phase (if multiple players control Space Stations then resolve the firing in Initiative Order). The weapons on a Space Station are shown on the right and each scenario will list which weapons each Space Station is using. These weapons do not need to be represented on the model as they change between scenarios. These are suggested weapon systems – feel free to invent your own for custom scenarios!

SPACE STATION SIZE	SCAN	SIGNATURE	THRUST	HULL	ARMOUR	PD
SMALL	6"	4"	0"	8	3+	5
MEDIUM	6"	6"	0"	12	3+	8
LARGE	6"	8"	0"	16	3+	12

TYPE	LOCK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	ARC	SPECIAL
MASS DRIVER ARMAMENT	3+	2	1	F/S/R	
LASER ARMAMENT	3+	2	1	F/S/R	BURNTHROUGH (6), FLASH
MISSILE ARMAMENT	3+	4	1	F/S/R	CLOSE ACTION



GROUND COMBAT

Although much of Dropfleet Commander focuses on the fighting in orbit, most objectives and key points being fought over are actually on the planet's surface. Ground to space combat is a tricky business because the combined effects of a planet's gravity well and atmosphere place a thick 'veil' between the two battlefields. Often a fleet's primary purposes will be to escort strike carriers and mother ships capable of sending invasion forces down to strategic objectives on the surface, or else to bombard those same objectives into oblivion.



THE PLANETARY BATTLEFIELD

While the fleet battles are unfolding in orbit, the often more critical battles are unfolding on the planet's surface with legions of troops engaged in gruelling battles for control over the planet's key strategic points. In game terms these strategic points are called 'Clusters' and they are made up of several 'Sectors'.

Clusters

A Cluster is a predetermined area of the game map and will usually contain between 2 and 5 Sectors of varying significance. A Cluster has a marked centre point and this is used both when placing the cluster on the battlefield during set-up but also when any scenario or rule requires you to be 'in range' of a Cluster.

Sectors

Sectors are the strategically important areas of a Cluster and are usually the areas where Ground Assets are deployed to defend them against your opponents! There are 6 types of Sectors in the game. Clusters can be made up of any combination of these although the scenarios will normally show you which ones to use.

If a scenario or special rule requires you to be in range of a Sector (as opposed to in range of a Cluster), then measure to the nearest edge of the Sector Token. These sectors have damage points and rules which are detailed in the Scenarios section.

Space Stations in Planetary Combat

Space Stations are very large and require substantial Ground Assets to control. They are treated as a single Sector for the purposes of resolving combat. Infantry, Armour and Batteries may be deployed to the Space Station in the same way as to a Sector in a Cluster. The player with the most Ground Asset tokens on a Space Station at the end of the Ground Asset Phase is the Controlling Player. In the event of a tie, no player controls the Space Station.



Bombardment

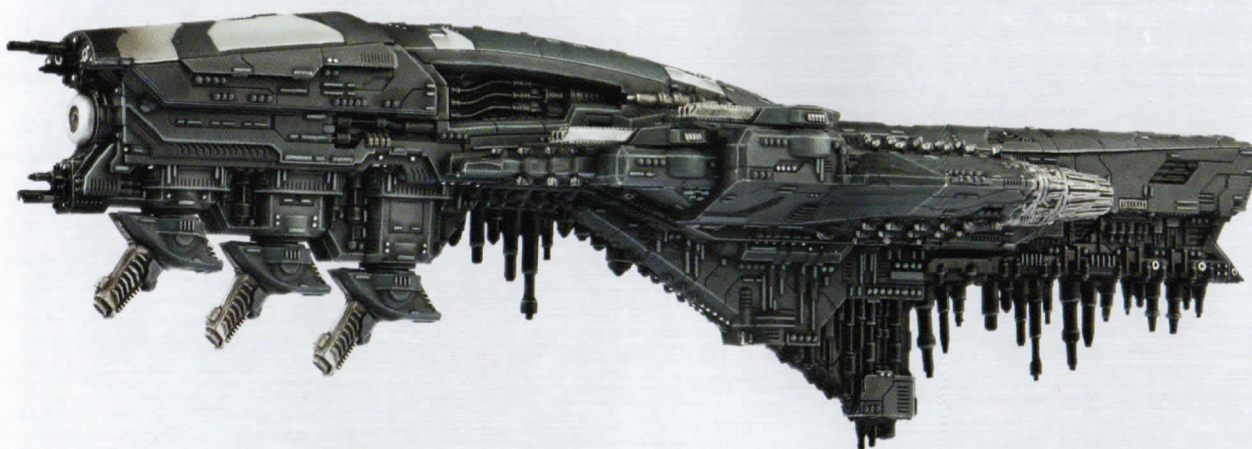
Sectors can only be targeted by ships in Low Orbit and follow the normal rules for being in Atmosphere.

If a Sector receives any damage it takes saving throws against it just like a ship. Critical hits ignore the saving throw as usual, however as most weapons will have a Lock value of 6+ for targeting something in Atmosphere, you will need a specialist weapon to achieve a Critical hit. (i.e. a weapon with the Bombardment special rule). You may only target a Sector with weapon systems if it does not contain any friendly Ground Assets (see Ground Assets).

If a Sector takes a damage point and the Sector is occupied by Ground Assets then you must roll for collateral damage. Each point of damage will inflict one point of damage on a Ground Asset in this sector (armour saving throws may be taken as normal). The player that inflicted the damage chooses how to distribute this damage. One point of damage must be allocated to each Ground Asset before a second point may be allocated.

A Sector that loses all of its Hull points is turned into ruins. Any Ground Assets in the Sector when this happens are destroyed on a roll of 2+, to represent the apocalyptic devastation done to a wide area of the surface. This will also remove the Sector's value as a strategic objective. Ruins can still be bombarded to try and destroy ground assets, though they have no hull value so do not record this damage. Refer to the Scenarios section for a Sector's Armour and Hull values.

Location	Hull	Armour
Commercial	8	4+
Military	6	3+
Industrial	4	4+
Ruins	-	6+



NUKE THE SITE FROM ORBIT

All capital ships carry a small compliment of nuclear warheads for very specific circumstances. The missile halo put up by enemy forces coupled with the radioactive fallout that renders the ground uninhabitable for centuries makes this a rarely used weapon. Nevertheless, the mass destruction that can be unleashed by such abominations is awe inspiring and without equal. As such, they still have a specialist place as a weapon of last resort in modern arsenals.

In games of Dropfleet Commander you may find yourself in the position to launch one of these devastating attacks against a Sector, however be warned, you might suffer a reduction in your victory point total for destroying valuable infrastructure! (see the Scenarios section).

Only ships of Medium, Heavy or Super Heavy tonnage value may launch a nuclear missile and there are a number of conditions you must satisfy in order to pull off this devastating attack. You must be on an order that allows you to fire a weapon system this turn, be in low orbit and in scan range of the Sector you wish to destroy, a ship may only launch 1 nuclear attack per turn (this is in addition to any other shooting you may normally be allowed to do). You may not target a Sector which contains friendly Ground Assets. Additionally, your opponent will not want you to destroy valuable ground assets and infrastructure so if any of their ships are within 12" of the Sector you are targeting, they will automatically prevent the attack due to their missile halo.

If the nuclear missile is launched, the Sector is destroyed on a roll of 2+. If destroyed, any ground assets there are removed from play. There are not even meaningful ruins remaining! Each other Sector in the Cluster also suffers 1 damage if the target Sector was destroyed (saves may be taken as normal).

GROUND ASSETS

Ground assets are units on a planet's surface that fight over things worth defending, capturing or blowing up depending on your perspective. They can be anything from regiments of soldiers to formations of tanks to emplaced weapon systems. Ground assets normally can't shoot at ships or influence the orbital battle directly, but they are vital for securing strategic objectives on the surface.

Ground Assets are usually deployed to the surface by Dropships or Bulk Landers (see page 63).

Ground Asset Rules

Ground assets are broken up into the following 3 categories, Infantry, Armour and Batteries. In game, these are normally represented by tokens. Each of these Ground Assets have their own rules and abilities.

Ground Asset characteristics are as follows:

Scan: This is the same as for ships as it shows the range the asset can detect things. This is rarely a concern as most Ground Assets can't shoot over long distances but is included for scenario usage and completeness.

Armour: Again just like ships this shows the chance to avoid taking damage. Where there are 2 armour values, for example 5+/3+, the first is their saving throw from damage caused by combat with enemy units and the second is their save from damage caused by bombardment. (note they all have 1 hull effectively, so a single point of Hull Damage will destroy them).

Attack: The number of dice the unit rolls when in combat with other Ground Assets.

Infantry

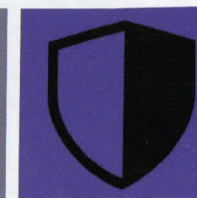
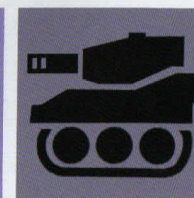
These are most commonly deployed from troopships and in vast numbers to hold strategically important locations on the planet surface. Their sheer numbers and the ability to hide inside structures and bunkers make them more likely to survive the effects of Orbital Bombardment on locations they are defending, but they are not as effective in a fight as an Armour.

	Scan	Armour	Attack	Special Rules
Infantry	0"	5+/3+	1	

Armour

Armour represents the most elite warriors and vehicles a faction has available to them and are normally deployed from fast, armoured Strike Carriers. They specialise in rapid orbital insertion and often range ahead of the armada, securing Critical Locations and holding them against enemy forces until the Infantry can be brought down to assist them. They specialise in taking on other elite troops and Infantry but due to their relatively low numbers and requirement to be in the open to operate effectively, are more vulnerable to the effects of Orbital Bombardment.

	Scan	Armour	Attack	Special Rules
Armour	0"	3+/5+	3	



Batteries

These giant defence bastions are most commonly deployed to the surface by Bulk Landers and provide the defending forces with the ability to destroy incoming enemy Dropships and Bulk Landers. They are however vulnerable to attack from the ground so if there are no friendly Infantry or Armoured tokens in their sector at the end of the Round Up Phase and one or more enemy Armour or Infantry tokens is in the same sector, then the Battery is removed from play.

If an enemy tries to land Ground Assets (see Dropships and Bulk Landers) in a Cluster or Space Station that contains one or more Batteries roll 1D6 for each Asset and on the roll of a 3+ it is destroyed and no token is placed. If the Asset is deployed by Dropships, then it is only destroyed on the roll of a 5+.

Batteries have the 'Immobile' rule, which means that once deployed they may not move or redeploy between Sectors. They are designed to rapidly deploy and hold ground but not to move – they are too dug in to be moved in the timeframe of a Dropfleet Commander game.

	Scan	Armour	Attack	Special Rules
Defence Battery	0"	3+/3+	0	Immobile

"A sea of fire and death the likes of which one would never dare to look upon again. This ocean of suffering is where our ambitions died, and where I too shall meet God. My ship sinks further as I catch the reek of roasting corpses... how is it that the true shame of war meets my eyes only now?" **Grand Admiral Ibrahim El-Amin**, 2135

Ground Assets Activation

Ground Assets are activated during the Ground Combat segment of the Roundup Phase. Ground Combats are resolved as follows.

1) Determine the Initiative

Often in games of Dropfleet Commander both sides will have ground assets they wish to use. Each player rolls 1D6 and adds the Admiral Value of their Admiral (see Admirals on p71). Players with the same score repeat this until an order of Initiative is established. A roll of 6 always wins Initiative, regardless of Admiral Value. Use Admiral Value to determine Initiative if more than one player rolls a 6. Dice off in the event of a tie. For the remainder of this phase, players will take it in turn to complete each stage in order of Initiative.

2) Movement

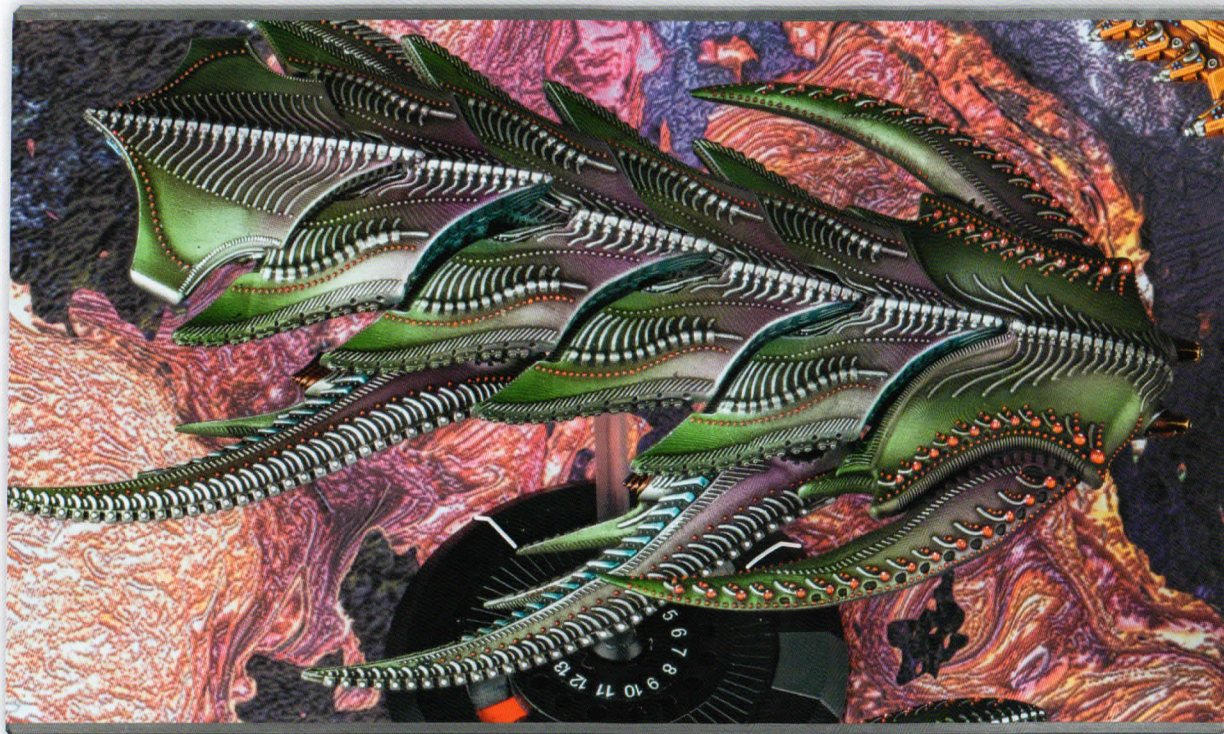
The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Cluster and moves any number of Ground Asset tokens into any other Sector in that Cluster, however, if enemy Infantry or Armour tokens are already in a Sector containing friendly tokens, you can't move tokens from that Sector.

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose a Cluster they have not selected this turn and move Ground Assets. Repeat this until every player has moved Ground Assets in every Cluster they wish to activate from this turn.

3) Resolve Combats

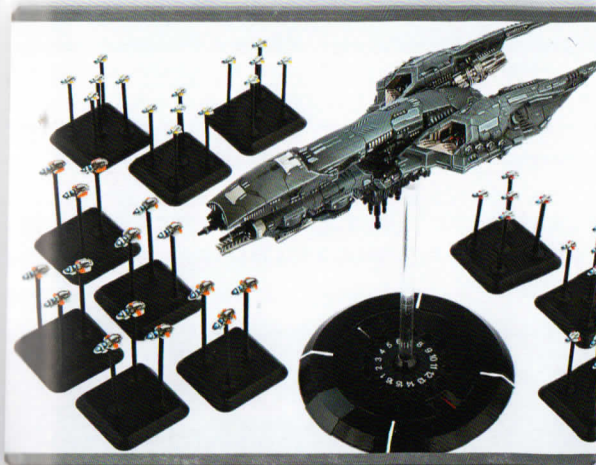
- The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Cluster and a Sector within that Cluster. All players total up the attack value of friendly tokens in the Sector.
- Each player rolls a number of dice equal to the combined attack value of their tokens. Every result of a 4+ causes 1 point of damage to an enemy Ground Asset token in the same Sector (note that Critical Hits are not inflicted in Ground Combat). Each player then allocates each point of damage they have caused to an enemy token. One point of damage must be allocated to every enemy token before a second point may be allocated.
- Once all damage has been allocated each player must roll for any saves on their tokens, removing any that fail their saves as casualties.
- Return to step A and pick another Sector to resolve. Keep picking Sectors until every Sector containing friendly and enemy ground assets has been resolved.

Note that it is entirely possible for opposing Ground Assets to be in a Sector together over several game turns. Combat continues to be fought in every turn.



LAUNCH ASSETS

Larger ships, particularly battleships and dedicated carriers, may carry smaller subordinate craft on board in the form of 'Strike Craft' like Dropships, Fighters and Bombers or 'munitions' – ship-killing Torpedoes and similar systems. Collectively these are called **Launch Assets** in Dropfleet and they all operate using the same game rules. Launch Assets are represented by tokens on the tabletop – either flat counters or bases with teeny tiny models on them.



An individual Launch Asset token represents a flight of Fighters/Bombers or a group of Torpedoes. Standard sizes for Strike Craft and munitions markers are the 20mm x 20mm tokens supplied. Note that Dropships and Bulk Landers do not have tokens as they resolve instantly and do not spend any time on the table.

Note that in the rules that follow all models that can deploy Launch Assets are referred to as 'carriers'. A carrier will most likely be a ship in practice, but it could be a ground-based airfield, orbital dock or other launch facility. In such cases these are still counted as 'carriers' for rules purposes when it comes to Launch Assets.

Carrier characteristics

Each Carrier has characteristics for its Launch Capability. These are detailed below:

Launch: How many tokens the carrier can launch in one turn.

Load: The type of launch assets the carrier can use. There may be a choice of different types but the carrier is still limited by its overall capacity and launch ability.

For example: A carrier might have the following characteristics:

LOAD	LAUNCH	SPECIAL
TORPEDOES	1	
FIGHTERS/BOMBERS	6	

This carrier could launch up to one Torpedo per turn. In addition, it could launch up to six Launch Assets which could be Fighters, Bombers or a mix of the two types.

Launching Assets

Operational carriers have the opportunity to use their Launch Assets during the Roundup phase after Ground Combat has been resolved. Launch Assets are resolved as follows;

1) Determine Initiative

Use the same Initiative values determined in the Ground Combat segment. Use the same rules for determining them if you have not done so already.

2) Launch Torpedoes

The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Group that he/she wishes to launch Torpedoes from this turn. The player then places all the Torpedo tokens they wish to launch from this Group next to the ship(s) they are targeting.

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose to launch Torpedoes from a Group that has not launched Torpedoes yet this turn. Repeat this until every player has launched Torpedoes from every ship they wish to launch from.

3) Launch Bombers

The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Group that he/she wishes to launch Bombers from this turn. The player then places all the Bomber tokens they wish to launch from this Group next to the ship(s) they are targeting.

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose to launch Bombers from a Group that has not launched Bombers yet this turn. Repeat this until every player has launched Bombers from every ship they wish to launch from.

4) Launch Fighters

The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Group that he/she wishes to launch Fighters from this turn. The player then places all the Fighter tokens they wish to launch from this Group next to the ship(s) they are targeting.

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose to launch Fighters from a Group that has not launched Fighters yet this turn. Repeat this until every player has launched Fighters from every ship they wish to launch from.

5) Launch Dropships and Bulk Landers

The player with the lowest Initiative selects a Group that he/she wishes to launch Dropships and Bulk Landers from this turn. The player then places all Ground Asset tokens resulting from this launch from this Group next to

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." General Sun Tzu, around 500BC

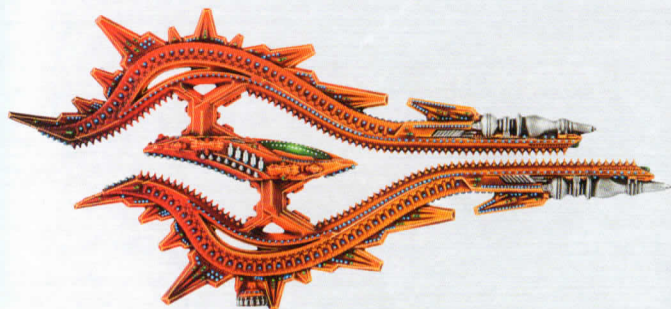
the Sectors and Space Stations they are targeting (note that no Dropship or Bulk Lander tokens are placed as they resolve instantly – see p63).

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose to launch Dropships and Bulk Landers from a Group that has not launched Dropships and Bulk Landers yet this turn. Repeat this until every player has launched Dropships and Bulk Landers from every ship they wish to launch from.

Note: If you choose to activate a Ship Group it must launch something, you may not choose not to launch anything as a way to make your opponent reveal their plans!

6) Resolve Launch Asset effects

Once all the Groups containing Launch Assets have deployed their assets, you must then resolve their effects. Firstly, place any ground tokens from Dropships and Bulk Landers. Next, starting with the player with the Initiative, select 1 enemy ship to resolve the effects of any tokens against it. Then the player with the next highest Initiative selects 1 enemy ship to resolve and so on until all the of the launch asset tokens have been resolved.



Launch Asset Effects

Launch assets generally function like a special kind of weapon system, but because of their unique properties there's some special rules that apply to them.

IMPORTANT RULE!

Launch Assets can be used against targets that are outside the Carrier's Scan+ Target's Signature range. The assets have enough independence that they can search for the target on arrival. Launch Assets travel in a straight line and may therefore have to pass through scenery on their way to their target.

Much like Close Action weapons, Launch Assets do not count against the number of weapon systems the ship may fire during a turn due to special orders, but likewise if the carrier can't fire for any reason it cannot use Launch Assets either.

Launch Assets take some time to reach their targets and so they might not be resolved immediately (see Time to Target).

Spikes For Launching

A ship that launches any Strike Craft and/or munitions gains a Minor Spike in addition to any that they received for their orders that turn.

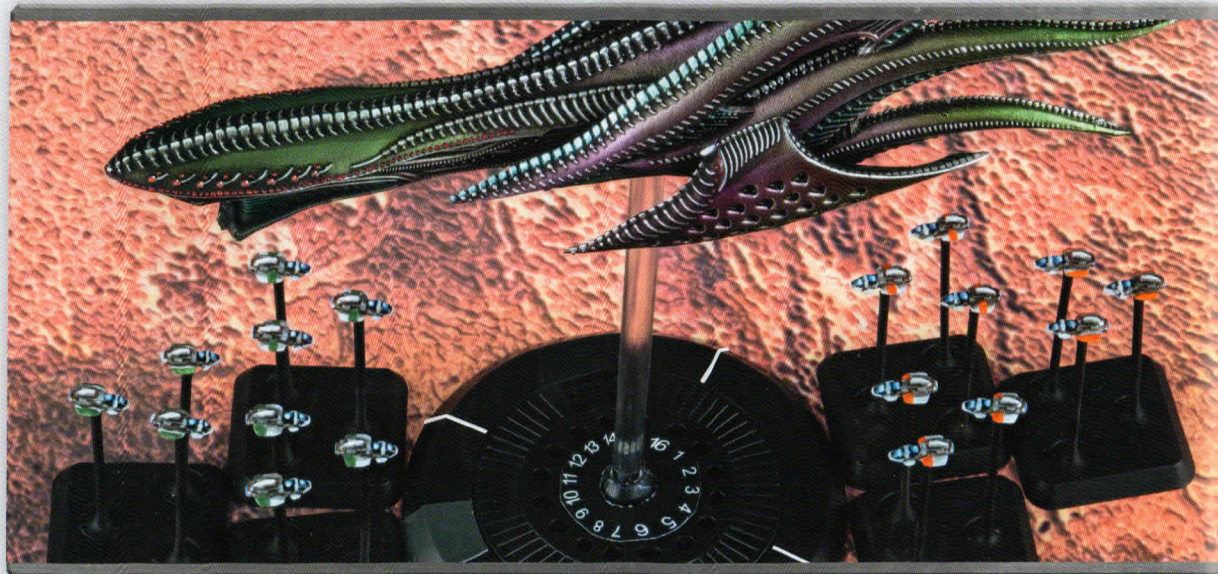
Launch Asset Characteristics

Launch Assets have a characteristic line as follows in this example of a UCM bomber;

	THRUST	ATTACK	LOCK	DAMAGE
UCM BOMBER	12"	2	3+	1

Attack, Lock, Damage and Special all function identically to weapon system characteristics.

A Launch Asset's Thrust is the maximum distance it can travel to reach its target in a single phase.



TIME TO TARGET

Launch Assets have to travel to their target and may even have to spend some time hunting for it, space is big, they are small and their sensor gear is limited in comparison to that of a ship. The time to target depends on the range from the launching carrier to the target.

Launched at a target within Thrust range

If the target is within a distance equal to the asset's Thrust characteristic or less it's a quick sprint and the Launch Asset takes effect this turn (See Launch Asset Effects).

Launched at a target within Twice Thrust range

If Launch Assets are sent against a target more than its Thrust away but within twice their Thrust a longer journey is necessary and there is a slight delay before the launch assets arrive. Place the launch assets in contact with the target's base (or with each other if there is no more room left around the base), they will take effect at the end of the target's activation in the next game turn.

No targets within Thrust range

Strike Craft and Torpedoes do not have the endurance to fly around looking for targets on their own. The only Launch Assets that can be used when there are no targets within 2x Thrust range are defensive fighters to support friendly ships.

DROPSHIPS AND BULK LANDERS

Dropships and Bulk Landers operate a little differently to Strike Craft and Torpedoes. They are designed for plummeting towards a pre-set dropzone on the planet's surface as fast as possible instead of chasing down enemy vessels in space. Dropships and Bulk Landers may only be launched against a target within their Thrust range and may not be sent to targets beyond their Thrust range.

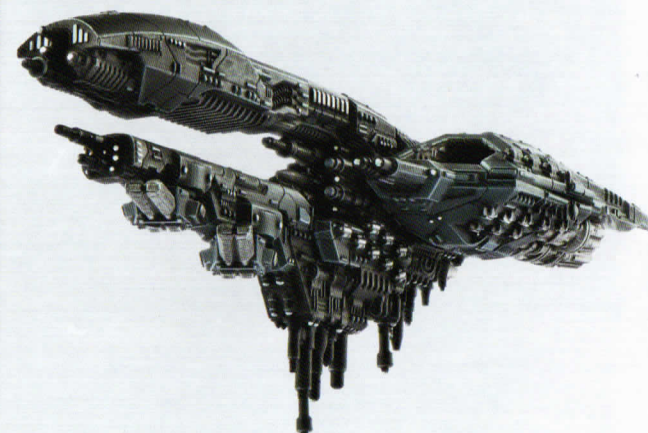


Carrier example: A carrier with the characteristics shown in the previous example moves and then conducts its firing during its activation in the turn. In the Roundup Phase it can Launch Assets against the two available targets; A (within Thrust range) and B (within twice Thrust range). The carrier has one munitions launch capacity and six Strike Craft launch capacity. The owning player decides to use its munitions launch to send a Torpedo against target A and send the six Strike Craft as Bombers against Target B. The Torpedo takes effect immediately because the target is within the torpedoes' Thrust range. The Strike Craft, however, have to chase down their target as it is more than their Thrust range so they do not take effect until the end of Target B's next activation.

Launch Assets in Orbital Combat

Strike Craft and munitions are limited to operating in certain Orbital Layers. The configuration and design specifications required for operating in atmosphere are very different to those needed in High Orbit. As such the following limitations apply:

- Dropships may operate in Atmosphere only or Low Orbit if they are launching against a Space Station within 3".
- Bulk Landers may operate in Atmosphere and Low Orbit only.
- All other Launch Assets may operate in Low and High Orbit only. Other Launch Assets originating from surface-based carriers deploy into and operate in Low and High Orbit only.
- If a ship with Launch Assets in contact with it enters Atmosphere, the Launch Assets are removed from play as they either burn up or return to their carrier.



LAUNCH ASSET EFFECTS

The effects of a Launch Asset depend on its type and what it's in contact with. If an interaction is not listed (i.e. Bombers with friendly ships) there is no effect.

Important Rule: Once a launch asset has taken effect the token is removed immediately.

All launch assets rely on limited fuel and one-shot weapons to pack enough punch into their diminutive frames to threaten bigger ships. Once they take effect they're either expended or need to return to their carrier for rearming and refuelling. The one exception to this is the deadly Torpedo, a weapon specifically designed for long pursuits.

BOMBER WINGS

When Bombers from multiple sources attack the same target they coordinate their run to overwhelm its Point Defence. Roll all of the Bomber's attacks together when they take effect and treat it as a single attack versus the target's Point Defence so the defender only rolls for PD once for the ship instead of against each token's attack separately.

For example: Six Bomber tokens launched from 2 carriers attack an enemy ship together. Each Bomber makes two attacks normally, but in this case they can make a coordinated attack and roll all twelve attacks at once. The enemy ship's Point Defence will only roll once against the massed attack instead of separately against each Bomber.

STRIKE CRAFT

Fighters

Fighters are lightweight, agile craft intended as dedicated interceptors of opposing Strike Craft and Close Action weapons. Fighters serve an interceptor role for ships by flying in close support and improving a friendly unit's Point Defence. Fighters lack the firepower necessary to make a dent on larger enemies so in Dropfleet they are limited to a purely defensive role.

Fighter tokens can take effect at various times throughout the game, as detailed below. They may take effect from when they are placed onwards, even if launched using twice their thrust range.

Friendly units: Add bonus dice to their PD characteristic against a single attack from Launch Assets or Close Action weapons. The number of bonus dice added varies by race (see Fighters table). The owning player must decide whether or not to expend the fighters against an attack once the damage is known but before PD dice are rolled. If the protected unit moves the fighter marker is moved with it.

Once the Fighter marker has taken effect it returns to its carrier and is removed from play. Any Fighters which have not taken effect by the following Roundup Phase are removed as they are forced to fly back and refuel.

For example: A Strike Wing of four UCM Fighter markers are launched to protect a friendly target. The target gains +12 PD and the Fighters stay with it until the owning player chooses to use the Fighters to supplement its Point Defence against an attack from Launch Assets or Close Action weapons. The owning player can choose to add some, all or none of the escorting Fighter markers to its defence when attacked, gaining +3PD for each while potentially keeping some back to resist an anticipated attack later in the turn.

Any fighters used return to their carrier as they have now taken effect. Any fighters that haven't been used by the time the next Roundup phase arrives will be removed even though they haven't taken effect.

Fighters		
	Thrust	Point Defence Bonus
UCM	20"	+3
Scourge	24"	+3
PHR	20"	+4
Shaltari	24"	+4

Enemy Ships: Remove one enemy Fighter token from this ship (they keep each other occupied in dogfighting!) This may only be done when resolving launch asset effects (during the roundup phase) just before Bombers take effect.

Bombers

Bombers are Strike Craft that carry serious ship-killing weaponry, typically deploying a mixture of stand-off missiles and one-shot, high-intensity energy weapons.

Bombers have the following effect when they arrive on target:

Enemy units: Make an attack with the bombers profile.

Bombers					
	Thrust	Attacks	Lock	Damage	Special
UCM	12"	2	3+	1	-
Scourge	15"	2	3+	1	Scald
PHR	12"	2	2+	1	-
Shaltari	15"	2	3+	1	-

Dropships

Dropships are transporters used for rapidly deploying armoured forces down to a planet's surface. They are agile, well armoured and armed for their size to weather the storm of defensive fire they invariably attract.

Dropships may enter Atmosphere only or low orbit if they are launching against a Space Station within 3".

Dropships have the following effect when they arrive on target:

Ground Sector or Space Station: When a Dropship token arrives on target it will deliver one Armour or Infantry token to the Sector or Space Station. Since there is no actual game time between the deployment and landing of the Dropship tokens there is no need to physically place them. For speed of play and ease of use, most players will find it easier to declare where they are deploying troops, resolve any ground fire from Batteries and then directly place the Infantry or Armour tokens without using a Dropship token.

Dropships	
	Thrust
UCM	3"
Scourge	3"
PHR	3"
Shaltari	3"

Bulk lander

Bulk landers are large, lightly armoured landing craft used by troopships to deploy large numbers of ground troops or antiship weapon emplacements. Bulk Landers are considerably slower and more vulnerable than Dropships, as they are not designed for 1st wave assaults on entrenched positions, but rather as occupying or reinforcing troops once a beachhead is secured.

Bulk landers may only be launched by carriers that are in Low Orbit or Atmosphere.

Bulk Lander tokens have the following effect when they arrive on target:

Ground Sector or Space Station: When a Bulk Lander token arrives on target it will deliver three Infantry tokens or one Battery token to the Sector or Space Station. Similarly to Dropships, since there is no actual game time between the deployment and landing of the Bulk Lander tokens there is no need to physically place them. For speed of play and ease of use, most players will find it easier to declare where they are deploying troops, resolve any ground fire from Batteries and then directly place the Infantry or Battery tokens without using a Bulk Lander token.

Bulk Lander	
	Thrust
UCM	6"
Scourge	6"
PHR	6"
Shaltari	6"



MUNITIONS

Torpedoes

Torpedoes are very large, ship-killing missiles that are much more dangerous than the types ordinarily categorised as Close Action weapons. Torpedoes are heavily armoured and well protected against opposing Point Defences with decoys and jamming to ensure they will get close enough to the target to deliver a potentially devastating hit.

The relatively slow acceleration of Torpedoes means they never attack immediately even if the target is within their Thrust range, instead place the Torpedo in contact with the target and execute the attack at the end of the target's next activation.

A Torpedoes token has the following effects when it arrives on target:

Enemy units: Make an attack with the Torpedoes' profile. Point Defence has no effect against damage inflicted by Torpedoes.

If a Torpedo does not hit (i.e does not achieve its lock value or higher on a roll), leave the token in base contact with the target, the torpedo token will attack again at the end of the target's next activation.

Torpedoes					
	Thrust	Attacks	Lock	Damage	Special
UCM	9"	1	2+	6	-
PHR	9"	1	2+	6	-
Scourge	9"	1	2+	4	Corruptor

DEFENCE AGAINST LAUNCH ASSETS

Point Defence

Point Defence can be used to block Hull damage caused by Launch Assets as it all counts as being made with Close Action weapons. Note, however, that Point Defence has no effect on attacks from Torpedoes as they are specially designed to overcome it.

Manoeuvre

A ship which activates when it has Launch Assets in contact with its base can use hard manoeuvring to try and 'shake off' the Launch Assets and spoil their attack run. If the ship uses Course Change or Max Thrust special orders roll a D6 for each enemy launch asset targeting the ship. On a roll of 4+ the Launch Asset is shaken off and removed. On a roll of 1-3 the Launch Asset doggedly pursues and takes effect at the end of the target's activation as normal.



Extended example: Remember Target B from the example earlier? It had six incoming strike craft on it. Before target B activates a friendly carrier places three Fighter markers on its base in defence to help against the attack, meaning target B increases its Point Defence by 9 for the friendly Fighters. When target B activates the owning player decides to take no chances and also uses Course Change special orders to try and shake off the enemy Strike Craft.

OUTMANOEUVRING TORPEDOES

Torpedoes are relentless in their pursuit of a target and not so easy to shake off. Only remove a Torpedo marker if a 6 is rolled, on a 4 or 5 the Torpedo does not attack this turn but instead remains in contact with the target ship's base ready to attack again after the target's next activation.

A D6 is rolled for each of the attacking Strike Craft markers, a roll of 4+ removes the marker. Three Strike Craft markers are removed by the Course Change leaving three enemies to attack at the end of target B's activation.



The enemy strike wing makes its attack. The strike wing comprises three Bombers and so it rolls six attack dice (two for each Bomber) with a Lock of 3+. The Bombers roll 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, scoring two points of Hull damage and two critical points of Hull damage. Target B has a Point Defence of 4 normally and the owning player decides to add 9 more by committing all three of the defending Fighters so he rolls 13 Point Defence dice unluckily scoring 6,5,4,4, 3, 3,3,3,2,2,1 – a mere two successes! The player can opt spend both successes to block one critical hit from the Bombers and hope the ship's Armour will stop the other two points, or stop the two normal hits and suffer two points of Hull damage with no Armour save from the critical hits. Once the attack has been made all Strike Craft including the friendly Fighters return to their carriers for recovery and are removed.

SHIP SPECIAL RULES

While most eventualities and ship types are covered in the rules above, certain ships have abilities and attributes that are out of the ordinary and require special rules to address this. Those which have unique or very esoteric capabilities not covered by the rules below are covered in the ship description itself.

Aegis (X)

Aegis ships are typically smaller types equipped with sensors and weaponry that permit a blindingly fast response time against Strike Craft and munitions. They are normally deployed as scouts or to help protect other ships in battle.

Ships with the Aegis special rule add a bonus to the Point Defence value of any friendly ships within 4" of them equal to the number shown in brackets. In order to be affected, ships must be on the same Orbital Layer as the Aegis ship, additionally the bonus also applies to the Aegis ship itself.

For example: A ship with the Aegis (5) special rule is within 4" of a friendly ship with a PD characteristic of 4. As long as they remain within 4" the friendly ship counts as having a PD of 9.

Atmospheric

Ships with the Atmospheric special rule are capable of entering the Atmospheric layers during Orbital Combat.

Beast

Some technologies integrate their crews so closely with their ship control systems that the vessels behave more like living creatures than machines. A beast ship becomes particularly dangerous when it takes Crippling Damage as it lashes out furiously.

The Lock numbers of all of a Beast ship's weapon systems are reduced by one when it suffers a Crippling Damage result. However, the strain of overload causes the beast ship to suffer another Crippling Damage result at the end of each activation.

Cloak

Cloaking ships are designed to efficiently dissipate the tell-tale energy emissions caused by manoeuvring and weapons fire so that they remain harder to detect during battle. The Partial Cloak and Full Cloak special rule only applies while the ship is still uncrippled, so once it loses 50%+ of its Hull the Cloak rule no longer applies.

Partial Cloak

A ship with the Partial Cloak special rule can only ever receive a Minor Spike, it may never be increased to a Major Spike. If a rule or weapon would cause this ship to gain Major Spike, it instead gains a Minor Spike (or nothing at all if it already has a Minor Spike).

Full-Cloak

A few rare ships are so efficient at covering their emissions that they are virtually ghosts. A ship with the Full Cloak special rule can never receive an energy spike for any reason.

Detector

Detector ships have extraordinarily acute sensors and high speed information dissemination systems that relay their scanning feeds to the rest of the fleet. Detector ships may always use Active Scan special orders even if their battlegroup has chosen a different special order for the turn. Every Detector ship in a Group may active scan, not just one.

Launch

Ships with the Launch special rule are capable of carrying and launching Strike Craft and/or munitions. Launch capable ships will have their launch capacity noted in their descriptions along with the standard type load carried (i.e. Fighters, Bombers or Torpedoes as appropriate).

LOAD	LAUNCH	SPECIAL

Open

Some ships are designed to operate alone and away from other members of their Group or Battlegroup and still maintain effectiveness throughout the battle. Ships with the Open rule do not need to maintain coherency with other members of their Group or Battlegroup and the Battlegroup will suffer no negative modifiers to their strategy rating while ships with this rule are out of coherency.

Outlier

Ships with this rule may ignore Battlegroup (but not Group) coherency rules, and the Battlegroup will suffer no negative modifiers to their Strategy Rating while ships with this rule are out of Battlegroup coherency.

"This place is surely the Land of Sand and Blood. The Shaltari have wreaked upon us this day such a slaughter that I hope we never face again. I have but three ships left, all that remains is for us to sell our lives dearly in the hope the Urchins have less stomach for blood than us." Aaru Fleet Admiral Yuto N. Yamamoto, 2399

Rare

Rare ships are simply not available in large numbers due to their specialised nature or high demand. You may only take a maximum of one of each Rare Group in a Skirmish sized game, two in a Clash and three in a Battle (see page 73).

Reinforced Armour

Some ships have unbelievably dense armour sometimes mated with hull shapes perfectly designed to deflect attacks. A ship with Reinforced-Armour only suffers Critical Hits from attack dice that score three more above their Lock number instead of two.

Regenerate (X)

Ships with the Regenerate characteristic have self-sealing hulls and rapid replication technology that allows them to quickly repair damage in combat.

A ship with Regenerate can make a number of damage control rolls equal to (x) in the Roundup phase of the turn to regain lost hull points.

For example, a ship with Regenerate (3) could roll up to three damage control dice to restore lost hull points during the Roundup phase of the turn.

Crippling Damage also shuts down the ship's ability to Regenerate lost hull points for the remainder of the game. The ship can still attempt to repair Crippling Damage results as usual, but the Regenerate ability cannot be repaired. Regenerate damage control rolls also may not be modified for any reason. Note that there is still a chance of the ship taking additional Hull damage if it rolls a 1 on a Regenerate damage control dice - things don't always work right.

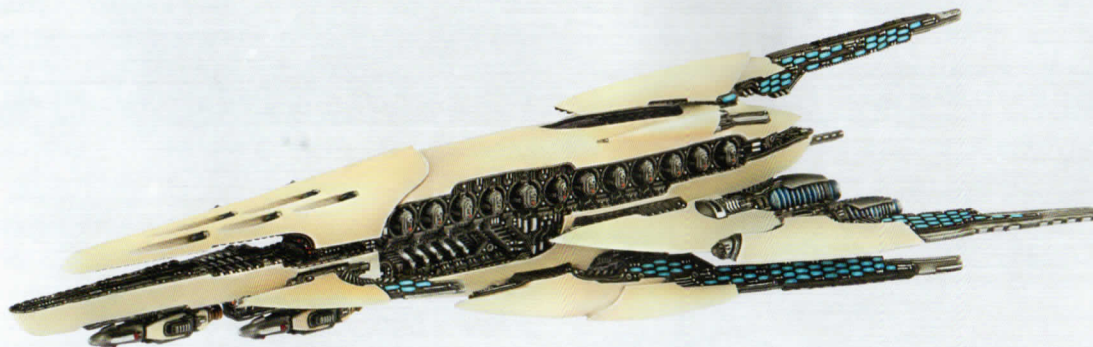
Stealth

Stealth ships are constructed with additional subsystems to disguise limited use of weapons and mask the presence of a firing ship. A ship with the Stealth special rule may fire a single weapon system when using Silent Running special orders (note this also means it can use close action weapons when Silent Running)

The Stealth special rule only applies while the ship is still uncrippled, so once it loses 50%+ of its Hull the Stealth rule no longer applies.

Vectored

Some ships are incredibly agile, able to turn and change direction in the blink of an eye. Ships with this rule are able to turn at any point in their movement, instead of when the order they have chosen states.



WEAPON SYSTEM SPECIAL RULES

The intelligent races display endless ingenuity in the ways they come up with to hurt each other over extremely long distances. Specialised traits that fit in with specific tactical requirements or optimal ship building protocols provide weapons with a wide variety of effects and quirks. The following list is far from comprehensive.

Alternate fire weapons (Alt-X)

Some weapon systems, most notably energy-based weaponry, can be fired with a variable focus or power output to generate significantly different effects.

A weapon system with Alternate fire modes will be represented by two or more lines on the weapon system characteristics with Alt followed by a number (e.g. Alt-1) in the special section. Only one weapon system with the same Alt number on the weapon characteristics may be fired by the same ship each turn.

Air-to-Air

Weapons systems designed for use in space are less effective when trying to fire through a planet's Atmosphere - projectiles burn up due to friction and energy weapons ionise uncontrollably. A few specialist ships, however, have weapon systems purpose-made for use in atmosphere.

Weapon systems with this special rule may fire at ships in atmosphere with no penalty if they are also in atmosphere. All other penalties still apply, including needing a 6+ to shoot at ground targets. Air to Air weapon systems perform just like normal weapons when firing outside of atmosphere. Air to Air weapons that also have the close action rule may be fired at targets in Atmosphere in addition to other Orbital Layers.

Bloom

Some weapons give off an especially bright signature when fired. These creations are utterly unsubtle and usually immensely powerful! Weapons with this special rule add a minor spike to the firing ship when this weapon is fired. This is in addition to any spikes gained from special orders or other sources.

Bombardment

Bombardment weapons are specialised systems designed to inflict maximum damage on surface-based targets. Bombardment weapons can't be used against other ships or orbital assets, only ground sectors. In order to fire a bombardment weapon a ship must be in Low Orbit or Atmosphere.

Unlike other weapon systems bombardment weapons incur no penalties for firing through orbital layers or shooting through atmosphere – it's what they're made for.

Burnthrough (X)

Burnthrough weapon systems are typically coherent high energy beams like lasers or particle lances which can melt straight through a ship if they are kept on target for long enough.

If an Attack dice for a Burnthrough weapon scores equal to or above its Lock number the Attack dice can be rolled again. If the second Lock roll is successful a third Lock roll can be made and so on until a Lock roll is failed. A Burnthrough weapon can score a maximum total of (X) total Hull damage points in one activation before it has to be taken offline to cool down.

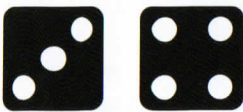
Example: A Burnthrough (6) weapon system can score up to six damage in a single activation.

If a Critical Hit (i.e. rolling two or higher than the required lock number) is scored by a Burnthrough weapon, only that die will ignore the target's Armour. Any subsequent hits rolled by this weapon against the same target during the same activation ignore the target's armour too.

BURNTHROUGH EXAMPLE

NB: The Burnthrough weapon firing in this example is a UCM Cobra Laser, with 2 Attack dice, a Lock Value of 3+ and a Damage Cap of 6 (Burnthrough 6)

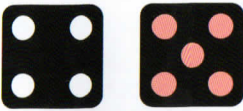
1st Roll



2 DAMAGE RUNNING TOTAL

Both rolls make the Lock Value, so can be rolled again.
Neither beat the Lock Value by 2 or more, so saves may be taken later.

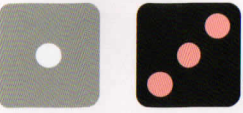
2nd Roll



4 DAMAGE RUNNING TOTAL

Both rolls make the Lock Value, so can be rolled again.
The 5 beats the Lock Value by 2 or more (a Critical Hit!), so 1 save may be taken later. **ALL subsequent successes are Critical Hits.**

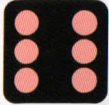
3rd Roll



5 DAMAGE RUNNING TOTAL

The 3 makes the Lock Value, so can be rolled again.
Since the 5 in the last roll was a Critical Hit, this is a Critical Hit too.

4th Roll



6 DAMAGE RUNNING TOTAL

This makes the Lock Value but may not be rolled again, as the weapon's Damage Cap of 6 has been reached.

**The 3 saves (from rolls 1 and 2) are now taken.
One is failed, so 4 Hull Points are inflicted.**

Maulers

Maulers are a specialised kind of close action Burnthrough weapon that establishes a 'link' with the target ship typically via an ionised trail and then feeds focussed energy pulses along the trail to intensify the attack for as long as the Lock is maintained. They are particularly effective against thick armour as the pulses can be modulated to disrupt it at a molecular level.

Maulers work in the same way as Burnthrough weapons except that their Lock number is always equal to the Armour of the targeted ship. Maulers are close action weapons so their damage can be mitigated by Point Defence (effectively it is disrupting the ionised trail).

For example; A Mauler is being fired at a ship which has Armour 3+. The Lock number of the Mauler is therefore also 3+.

Calibre (X)

Certain weapon systems have been designed to be effective against ships of a specific size. Weapons with the Calibre rule will be followed by either L, M, H, S which refers to the tonnage value they have been designed to target.

When these weapons are fired at targets with the same tonnage value as their weapon, reduce the lock value on their profile by 1. If the weapon has more than 1 tonnage value listed, then reduce the Lock when shooting at any of the listed tonnage values.

For example; a weapon with a Lock of 5+ and the Calibre (L) rule is targeting a frigate. As frigates have a tonnage value of L (Light) you would reduce the Lock value of the weapon by 1 to 4+.

POINT DEFENCE (PD)

Ships always have their Point Defence as another line of defence to specifically protect them against damage inflicted by Strike Craft, Munitions and Close Action weapon systems. A ship's Point Defence made up of light, fast-firing weapons primarily intended to track and intercept incoming attacks of these kinds, both physical and energy-based.

When a ship receives damage from these sources roll a number of dice equal to the ship's PD characteristic. Each Point Defence dice that succeeds in scoring a 5 or 6 will block one point of Hull Damage before Armour or Passive Countermeasure saves are taken.

Critical hits can be stopped by Point Defence but each point of Critical Hit damage blocked takes two Point Defence successes instead of one.

For example; A cruiser with a PD characteristic of 6 is attacked and suffers four normal points of Hull damage and two points of critical Hull damage from Close Action weapon systems. Rolling six dice for Point Defence it gets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. – two successes. The ship's Point Defence can stop two points of ordinary Hull damage or one of the points of critical Hull damage.

Close Action

Some of the most devastating weapon systems usable in space are only effective at relatively close range due to their inherent inaccuracy, relatively slow projectile speed or rapid dispersal. These 'Close Action' weapon systems compensate for their weakness by unleashing a veritable storm of fire to overwhelm a target's defences; examples include massed missile salvos, plasma and fusion cannon batteries, pulse lasers, minelets and launchers. Almost all ships have a close action weapon system of some sort and some ships, particularly smaller escorts and frigates, might have only close action weapons.

Close Action weapon systems may only be used against targets that are both within their fire arc and inside the firing ship's Scan range. Close action weapons can be fired in addition to any other weapon systems permitted by a ship's orders. A ship that is unable to use any of its weapon systems due to special orders may not use its close action weapons either.

Hits from Close Action weapons can be stopped by a target's Point Defence. Resolve the effects of Point Defence before taking any Armour or Passive Countermeasures saving throws.



Close Action (Swarmer)

Swarmer are a sub-classification of close action weapons which use decoys, split projectiles and other countermeasures to make them more capable of overwhelming Point Defences.

It takes one Point Defence success more than normal to stop a point of Hull damage from a Swarmer weapon. This means that two successes are need to stop a normal hit from a swarmer, three successes for a critical.

Close Action (Beam)

Some close action weapon systems rely entirely on projected radiation of one form or another and so are entirely unaffected by Point Defences. Close Action (Beam) weapon systems obey all the normal rules for close action weapon systems except one – Point Defences cannot be used against them at all!

Corruptor

Corruptor weapon systems include a payload or effect which causes ongoing damage to the target ship; Dangerous Malware, self-propagating corrosive materials, incendiaries or even biological organisms. These can be very dangerous for big ships as corruptor effects are hard to track down and eradicate within larger hulls.

A ship that takes a Critical Hit from a Corruptor weapon also suffers the equivalent of a 'Fire' Crippling Damage effect (although in this case no additional damage is caused immediately).

In addition, at the end of each subsequent activation by the corrupted ship roll one D6 for each point of Hull it has remaining. Each roll of a 6 causes another 'fire' effect to break out. This effect continues for the rest of the game and is not eliminated even if damage control efforts succeed in extinguishing all of the existing fires.

Crippling

Sitting at the very peak of military technology are weapons of such power that they can inflict Crippling Damage with a single hit.

Weapon systems with the Crippling characteristic inflict crippling damage when they score one or more critical hits in addition to any normal Hull Damage. Crippling damage is incurred regardless of the number of Hull points actually inflicted providing one or more Hull damage is suffered by the target. If a target ship is reduced to 50% hull or below by the attack it will need to make two Crippling Damage rolls and apply both of them.

Distortion

Distortion weapon systems use the opening of short-lived space/time wormholes to tear targets apart so the more accurately the weapon hits the more damaging it becomes. The damage value of a Distortion weapon system is equal to the number of hits the weapon system inflicts during the attack (before rolling any saving throws are rolled).

For example: A Distortion weapon with 4 Attack dice hits 3 times, this gives each hit a damage value of 3, so up to 9 Hull damage will be inflicted if all saves were failed! If the same weapon were to hit with all 4 attacks, it would inflict 16 Hull damage!

Escape Velocity

Escape Velocity weapon systems are specifically designed to target ships in higher orbital layers such as massive, ground based anti-ship weapons. These weapons ignore the penalties for firing through different Orbital Layers (including Atmosphere) and may be fired from Atmosphere. However, they must always target an enemy in a higher Orbital Layer than themselves.

Flash

Weapon systems with the Flash characteristic produce a highly visible energy signature when they connect with a target, effectively 'lighting it up' for everyone to see.

A ship that is hit by a Flash weapon system gains a Minor Spike in addition to any other damage effects. In addition, if the weapon system inflicts 3 or more damage from the attack, another Minor Spike is added to the target.

Fusillade (X)

Fusillade weapon systems feature enlarged capacitor banks or ammunition magazines so that they can really let loosed when the time is ripe.

When a ship uses the Weapons Free order, Fusillade weapon systems add the X value to their Attack value to determine the number of shots the weapon system can make this turn.

Impel (X)

Impel weapons are unusual, esoteric weapons that impart a change in angular momentum to their target if they inflict enough damage. If the firing player inflicts X damage (after saving throws have been taken) with a weapon with the Impel (X) special rule, they may turn the target up to 45 degrees in either direction.

Limited (X)

Certain weapons are so large, require massive ammunition or overheat so quickly that it is only possible to fire them a limited number of times during an engagement. Weapons with this rule will be expressed as L (X) in their special section. This weapon may only be fired X times in a game, so make your shots count! This can also apply to Launch Assets (typically to torpedoes), in which case the Asset may only be launched X times in a game.

Link (X)

Link weapon systems are configured in such a way that they can be fired simultaneously without impacting on a ship's other functions.

A weapon with this rule will normally be paired with a second weapon with the same Link (X) value. In order for a ship to fire more than one weapon it is normally required to declare a Weapons Free special order. However, all weapon systems with the same Link (X) number count as a single weapon system for activation purposes, although they may be fired at different targets.

Particle

Particle weapon systems are so devastating at the point of impact that physical armour and energy shields offer no defence against them. Weapon systems with this rule always inflict Critical Hits if the Lock value of their attack is met and passive saves may not be taken against them.

Scald

Scald weapon systems are ones that can pummel their targets whether with rapid fire bolts of superheated plasma or payloads of highly corrosive acid. They can literally melt their way through armour and internal components when fired at close range.

Armour against Hull damage from scald weapons suffers a +1 penalty when the firing ship is within Scan range of the target.

For example: A ship armed with Scald weapons hits a target that is within Scan range. The target's Armour is usually 3+ so against this attack it becomes 4+ instead.

FLEET ORGANISATION

Battlegroups in Dropfleet Commander are determined by the size of game chosen and the individual forces that players choose. There are three sizes of game; Skirmish, Clash and Battle. These indicate small, medium and large sized games, and give players restrictions on group numbers and ship types. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, it allows players to tailor games to their available time, fleet and scale. Secondly it creates further balance in the game; this stops situations where a fleet would comprise large numbers of battleships and no escort ships, or vast amounts of frigates with no larger ships etc. Creating balanced forces leads to much more balanced gameplay, where the player tactics and choices are even more important for victory. Clash sized games are recommended for tournament play.

Each ship has a Tonnage value as explained in the Ship Characteristics section. Players should compare that with the battlegroup types below and it will show how many of each group of that tonnage may be in each battlegroup. The large table (known as the Fleet Roster) will then show how many of each Battlegroup may be chosen for each game size.

PATHFINDER BATTLEGROUP	
LIGHT	1-3
MEDIUM	0-1
MAX	3

LINE BATTLEGROUP	
LIGHT	0-2
MEDIUM	1-3
MAX	3

THE FLEET ROSTER	BATTLEGROUP TYPE				
	PATHFINDER	LINE	VANGUARD	FLAG	MAX
SKIRMISH (500-999 PTS)	0-2	1-2	0-1	0	4
CLASH (1000-1999 PTS)	1-2	1-3	0-2	0-1	6
BATTLE (2000-3000 PTS)	1-3	1-4	0-3	0-2	7

e.g. Looking at the Battlegroup Type table, a Skirmish game has a 0-2 Pathfinder Battlegroups available. This means when playing a skirmish game, players could choose 0, 1 or 2 pathfinder battlegroups. Each Pathfinder battlegroup can contain 1-3 light tonnage groups and 0-1 medium tonnage groups, as shown on the 'Pathfinder Battlegroup' Table.

Each game size also has a Points Value spread (choose a specific value within this range before the game). Every ship in Dropfleet Commander has a Points Value in its stat line. Players may spend up to the defined Points Value on their fleet (but no more). Usually these points values will mean that players will not be able to fit every available battlegroup into a game, which is where players must make a choice as to what they want to include in their army.

Unless otherwise stated, a single Battlegroup may not come to more than 33% of your army's total allowed points cost for Clashes and Battles, and 50% for skirmishes. This does not include the points cost of your Admiral.

VANGUARD BATTLEGROUP	
LIGHT	0-1
MEDIUM	0-1
HEAVY	1-2
MAX	3

FLAG BATTLEGROUP	
LIGHT	0-1
SUPER HEAVY	1-2
MAX	2

Once you have built your fleet, you will need to determine your Strategy Rating for each Battlegroup in your fleet. To determine the Strategy Rating of each Battlegroup simply total up the Tonnage Value of each ship in the Battlegroup using the table below.

TONNAGE	TONNAGE VALUES
LIGHT	1
MEDIUM	5
HEAVY	10
SUPER HEAVY	15

For example, a Battlegroup consisting of 2 Medium ships and 4 Light ships would have a Strategy Rating of 14.

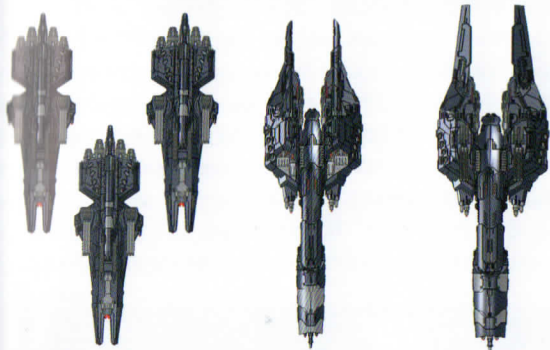
LAUNCH CAPACITY

Fighters, Bombers and Torpedoes are expensive resources and as such fleets only have a limited supply of them. This is represented in game by a Launch Capacity Cap and you may not have more total Launch Capacity for Fighters, Bombers and Torpedoes in your fleet than shown in the table below.

SKIRMISH	10
CLASH	15
BATTLE	20

For example, a ship with a Load of Fighters and Bombers and a Launch of 3 would count as 3 towards the cap.

SAMPLE BATTLEGROUP



3x Toulon Class
Frigates

Light -Tonnage 3

Seattle Class
Fleet Carrier*

Medium -Tonnage 5

Rio Class
Cruiser

Medium -Tonnage 5

Note: The Seattle uses 3 of the fleet's total available launch capacity

Strategy Rating = 13 (total Tonnage value of all ships in Battlegroup)

UCM LINE BATTLEGROUP

ADMIRALS

Fleets seldom succeed in battle without a good Admiral. In fluid situations, the actions and decisions of frontline leaders (those actually present at the engagement) often separates victory from defeat.

In Dropfleet, Admirals almost always direct the fleet from the largest and most powerful ship at their disposal. Within its protected confines, the Admiral can survey the engagement and give orders using high powered communications equipment.

Admirals cost points just like ships, but they do not have a Core Stat Sheet. Instead, they have an Admiral Stat sheet, such as below:

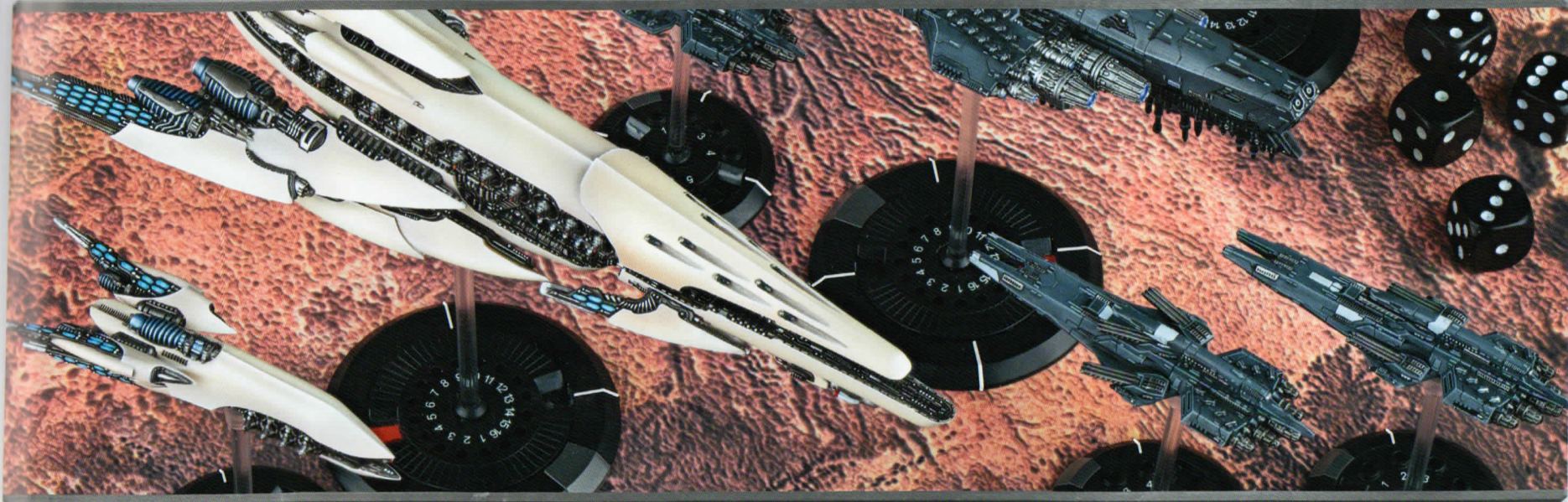
ADMIRAL	AV	ALLOWED	PTS
UCMF VICE ADMIRAL	4	C/B	80

Admiral: Admiral Name.

AV - (Admiral Value): Represents the abilities of an Admiral (higher numbers are better). This affects things such as the roll to determine Initiative.

Allowed: Defines what sized engagement they can be chosen to partake in. In this case, a UCMF Vice Admiral can be taken for a Clash or Battle, but not a Skirmish (an action too small to usually merit his/her presence).

Pts: How many points it costs to field this Admiral. A player may only field 1 Admiral in their fleet.



"Your Highness, I still have twelve battleships." Admiral Yi Sun-sin, 1597

Command Cards

Command Cards represent the specific actions and decisions made by the Admiral. Each card will state when it can be played and what its effects are. Command Cards add flavour and an additional tactical layer to games. However, games may be played without Command Cards with the agreement of all players. Each race has a distinct Command Card deck which may not be altered in any way, unless specified in the rules. This deck must be shuffled before the game begins.

Players may play as many cards as they like during a turn until they run out. A player can draw cards up to a hand size equal to the Admiral Value (AV) of their Admiral in each Planning Phase. This value only applies here if the Admiral is on the table.

If your Admiral is killed, the player may use an AV of 1 and must immediately discard command cards of their choice down to 1.

When a card is played or discarded for any reason it should be placed face-up in a discard pile, visible to all players. If a player runs out of cards in their deck, this discard pile should be turned face-down and shuffled into a new deck to draw from. A Command Card may be played on any unit on the table as described by the description in the 'Target' section.



A typical Command Card is set out as follows:



Play: Describes when a card can be played

Target: Describes the allowed Target(s) of the card. Each Group can only be Targeted once per turn per player, although cards which do not specifically target them or ships within them will still take effect (e.g. 'Target: all friendly Groups').

Effect: Describes the effect the card has on the target. Before the card takes effect, other players may play cards in response. Effects stack in reverse order when multiple cards are played simultaneously (the most recently played card takes effect first). You may also choose to wait until another card has taken effect before playing another.

Famous Admirals

Some Admirals have risen to legendary status, becoming household names, and are often held in fear, awe or infamy. These mighty individuals may occasionally be featured in battles. Famous Admirals may have several special abilities, and may even change the Fleet Roster to suit the unique fighting style for which they are famous. Before a battle, all players must agree to the use of Famous Admirals before they can be chosen. Rules for these will be available as special online downloads and in future books.



PREPARING FOR BATTLE

GAME SIZE

The rules support games of almost any scale, from small skirmishes to apocalyptic battles. Before you play, you must decide how big the game is going to be by selecting a total allowed points cost which fits into one of these three categories:

- 1) **Skirmish:** 500-999 points
- 2) **Clash:** 1000-1999 points
- 3) **Battle:** 2000-3000 points

As the game size increases, the number of Battlegroups permitted is capped. This means that larger games will not have many more activations per turn than smaller ones, making it more practical to fight epic engagements.

If you want to play a truly vast battle, you may use two or more Fleet Rosters split into these categories (although by using the lowest number of points possible). For example, if you want to play a 6000 point game. You can use two 'Battle' Fleet Rosters, but not six 'Skirmish' Fleet Rosters.

SCENARIOS

In addition to defining a game size, you must also choose a scenario. In war, the simple destruction of the enemy is often not the main goal of a particular tactical operation. Perhaps critical geosynchronous orbits must be captured to support ground invasions, enemy held cities might need to be razed from orbit etc. In futuristic warfare, many of these objectives are time critical, necessitating rapid deployment, insertion and support for your ground forces. A selection of scenarios are provided in this book, and many more will appear in the future.

Every Scenario will outline the following to define the rules of the game:

1) **Battlefield Layout:** An outline of the scenery and battlefield required. This will usually be quite loose, allowing you to play the same scenario in wildly different conditions. However, some will require specific features such as space stations.

2) **Number of players:** Some scenarios will only work with two sides and will require an even number of players (when there is a clear attacking side and defending side for example). Others will allow any number of players, sometimes all vying against each other.

3) **Fleet Roster:** In most scenarios, this section will simply state that the Standard Fleet Roster should be used. However, certain special scenarios will dictate more unconventional fleets, and will be accompanied by a special Fleet Roster chart which may replace the standard one or be permitted as an alternative.

4) **Approach Type:** Each scenario will define where and how each fleet may deploy on the battlefield.

5) **Number of Turns:** Games are played out as a number of turns. Each scenario will state how many of these there will be before the game ends.

6) **Victory Conditions:** Each Scenario will state what each player must do to secure victory. This will vary enormously between scenarios and will strongly dictate how the battle is played.

ACTIVATING BATTLEGROUPS NOT ON THE TABLE

When a Battlegroup not on the table is activated, it must be moved onto the table from any friendly edge. Groups entering the table this way start in High Orbit (although they may change Orbital layer as normal during their turn) and may be given Orders.

APPROACH TYPE

At the beginning of an engagement fleets approach the Battlefield in different ways. Which of these will be used will depend on the scenario:

1) **Directly Deployed:** Directly Deployed Battlegroups begin the game on the table and within 6" of a friendly board edge. Some special Scenarios may define an additional Deployment Zone where ships may be placed.

2) **Battleline:** All Battlegroups begin the game off the table but can be activated in the same way as a Battlegroup already on the table.

3) **Column:** The fleet is approaching the battlefield in a drawn out formation and will not all arrive at once. All Battlegroups begin the game off the table. On turn 1, two Battlegroups of your choice must be activated and move on. On turn 2, two more Battlegroups must be activated and move on. On turn 3, all remaining Battlegroups must be activated and move on.

4) **Distant:** The fleet cautiously approaches the battlefield, with lighter battlegroups arriving first. On turn 1, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 1-9 must be activated and move on. On turn 2, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 10-14 must be activated and move on. On 3, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 15 and above must be activated and move on.

5) **Rapid Response:** The fleet has been forced to respond to a developing threat on the fly. On turn 1, one Battlegroup of your choice must activate and move on. On turn 2, each remaining Battlegroup must be activated and move on on a roll of 4+ (roll separately for each Battlegroup). On turn 3, each remaining Battlegroup must be activated and moved on on a roll of 2+ (roll separately for each Battlegroup). On turn 4, all remaining Battlegroups must be activated and moved on.

"Diplomacy... stuff diplomacy! I have Battlefleets. I'll keep on stamping 'em out, pure and simple. When every last one of the bastards is dead and gone, I might just feel civil again."

Supreme Admiral Jacob G. Halsey, 2671

DROPFLEET COMMANDER SCENARIOS

SCENARIOS

Scenarios are essential to exploring the Dropfleet Commander universe and experiencing the wide range of game play available. The rules below give an introduction to the way scenarios work and the scoring methods to determine the victor of your games!

SCENARIO OBJECTIVES

While securing a planet's orbital lanes is key to gaining victory, controlling the ground is equally important. Vast swathes of the landscape are worthless, at least in the initial stages of the invasion, however, manufacturing, population and military sectors all provide an invading force resources they can use straight away from new recruits to logistical and military supplies. Capturing these areas is no less important than having orbital dominance and in games of Dropfleet Commander, controlling clusters and sectors is frequently the key to victory.

Clusters

Clusters are large urbanised areas on a planet's surface. Typically, they consist of a range of regions from commercial and manufacturing through to civilian districts and military enclaves. Control of these vast areas of manufacturing, military and civilian infrastructure are vital to controlling the planet. Clusters are made up of a number of sectors and controlling these key locations is critical to controlling the Cluster.

Some Scenarios will require you to Hold or Contest a Cluster in order to score Victory Points (VP's) in the game. To hold a Cluster, you must hold more sectors in that Cluster than your opponent. To contest a Cluster, you must hold 1 or more Sectors in that Cluster.

Players score VP's for holding and/or contesting Clusters at the end of the Roundup Phase on turns 4 and 6 unless the scenario defines otherwise.

Clusters come in three sizes, small, medium and large. A small cluster contains 2 sectors, a medium cluster contains 3 sectors and a large cluster contains 4 sectors. The VP's for holding or contesting clusters are shown below, certain Scenarios may change this scoring method.

CLUSTER SIZE	HOLD	CONTEST
SMALL	2VP	0VP
MEDIUM	3VP	1VP
LARGE	4VP	2VP

Sectors

Sectors are the key locations in Clusters that you must secure with ground forces in order to capture and defend their strategic advantage from your opponent! There are 6 types of sectors in the game (shown in the key) and you will be required to hold various combinations of these depending on the mission.

In order to hold a Sector, you must have more infantry/armoured tokens in that sector than your opponent at the end of the scoring turn, as described in the scenario. If you are required to contest a Sector, you must have 1 or more infantry or armoured tokens in that sector at the end of the of the scoring turn, as described in the scenario.

Each Sector has a value and the player that controls the highest total value of Sectors controls that Cluster.

You will notice that some of the Sectors have special rules which bring additional benefits or risks to the holder. These special rules are outlined next.

Defence Weapons

This militarised sector has weapons powerful enough to damage ships in orbit. At the beginning of the Ground Combat step, the holder of this Sector may fire the following weapon against a ship in range with the following profile. Range is measured from the centre of the Cluster and all Clusters count as having a Scan of 6".

TYPE	LOCK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	ARC	SPECIAL
DEFENCE WEAPONS	3+	2	1	F/S/R	ESCAPE VELOCITY

KEY

Sector	HULL	ARM	VAL	Special Rules
Commercial	8	4+	1	N/A
Industrial	4	4+	2	N/A
Military	4	3+	1	Defence Weapons
Orbital Defence	6	3+	1	Orbital Gun
Power Plant	6	4+	4	Volatile
Comms Station	4	5+	1	Scanner Uplink
Moon (LSO)				
 Cluster (of Sectors)				
 Clusters for Clash and Battle sized games				
 Space Station				
 Space Station for Clash and Battle sized games				

Orbital Gun

This represents surface based weapons designed to do terrible damage to orbiting ships. At the beginning of the Ground Combat step, the holder of this Sector may fire the following weapon against a ship in range with the following profile. Range is measured from the centre of the Cluster and all Clusters count as having a Scan of 6".

TYPE	LOCK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	ARC	SPECIAL
ORBITAL GUN	2+	1	2	F/S/R	ESCAPE VELOCITY, BURNTHROUGH (6), FLASH

Volatile

Destruction of this power plant will result in a catastrophic meltdown! If this Sector is destroyed, all other Sectors in the Cluster take 4 damage (saves may be taken against this damage as normal).

Scanner Uplink

This is the nexus for a network of orbiting and ground based scanners. All ships and other assets controlled by the holder gain +3" to their Scan Value. This effect is cumulative if you control multiple Sectors with this rule.

Other Scoring Methods

Most Scenarios have multiple ways of scoring victory points beyond holding Clusters, as shown below:

Critical Locations

Critical locations are key parts of the battlefield that you must control or contest with your ships in order to give your ground forces a fighting chance. However, some ships are better at controlling space than others. In order to hold a Critical Location, you must have more Tonnage Value *within 6 inches of it* and *in low orbit* than your opponent at the end of a specific game turn, as outlined in the scenario.

The player holding a Critical Location scores 2VP at the end of the Roundup Phase on turns 4 and 6 unless the scenario defines otherwise.

Surveying a Cluster

To survey a cluster, a ship must be in low orbit, within 6" of the centre point of the cluster and be on standard orders that turn. This happens at the end of a ship's movement. Only one ship per battlegroup of Tonnage 5 or more may survey a cluster per turn. You may not survey a cluster in turn 1.

When surveying a cluster roll 1 dice, on a roll of 1-4 you gain 1vp, on a roll of a 5+ you score 1 VP and the cluster becomes a critical location. You may only survey a cluster once per game but both sides may survey the same cluster over the course of a game. Once a critical location has been rolled for a cluster then an opponent that surveys the same cluster will automatically receive 1 VP – it does not become a second critical location!

Destroying a Cluster

Some Scenarios will require the demolition of Clusters! A Cluster counts as destroyed if all Sectors in a Cluster are reduced to Ruins.

Space Stations in Scenarios

Space Stations are sometimes included in Scenarios and are worth VP in various ways. If a mission requires a Space Station to be held, the holding player is the one with the most Ground Assets aboard.

VP's may be awarded for destroying or surveying Space Stations - use the same rules as for Clusters above. Space Stations may also count as Critical Locations (although only if the Space Station has not been destroyed).

Kill Points

Some Scenarios will explicitly reward you for destroying enemy ships. Kill Points equal the total points cost of all destroyed ships plus killed Admirals. A scenario may define how many Victory Points you will receive for a given number of Kill Points scored – worked out on the last turn.

In addition, Kill Points are always used in the event of a tie to determine a winner – if the total number of VP's players score is equal, the player with the higher number of Kill Points wins the game.

Nuke the Site From Orbit Penalty

Using nuclear weapons on a planet a faction needs to capture has negative consequences, but can be the only solution. Unless the Scenario states otherwise, a player always suffers -1VP for each successful use of a nuclear weapon against a Sector.

PLACING SCENERY

Each Scenario will define exactly where scoring scenery should be placed. In addition, most Scenarios will define a rough amount of additional scenery (Debris Fields, Planetary Rings etc) that you should use.

Sometimes, the placement of these will be defined precisely. At other times, the Scenario will require Debris Fields to be 'evenly spaced'. When the Scenario asks for this, you should stick to the following guidelines:

- 1) No part of any Debris Field should be placed within 6" of any board edge, Space Station, Cluster or any other Debris Field.
- 2) There should be roughly the same quantity of Debris Fields within each table quarter.
- 3) In tournament play, the Tournament organiser should place scenery before games.
- 4) If their size is not defined by the scenario, a typical Debris Field is between 4"-8" across in their longest dimension. Fine Fields should generally be larger than Dense ones.



SCENARIO 1 TAKE & HOLD

Your forces advance, ready to take the fight to the enemy on the surface and in the space above. But they are just as determined to hold the key strategic areas on this war-torn planet. Take the important landing sites and destroy their ships before they do the same to you!

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

Suggested Approach: Column

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-5 Fine, 4-6 Dense)

Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations).

Variant: The two clusters (and their Critical Locations) either side of the centre cluster are worth double victory points.

SCENARIO 2 MIXED ENGAGEMENT

Hostilities over this world are centred around militarily significant space stations and their ground based supply clusters. Capture these stations and their support clusters before the enemy can, and turn the stations' guns on the enemy fleet.

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

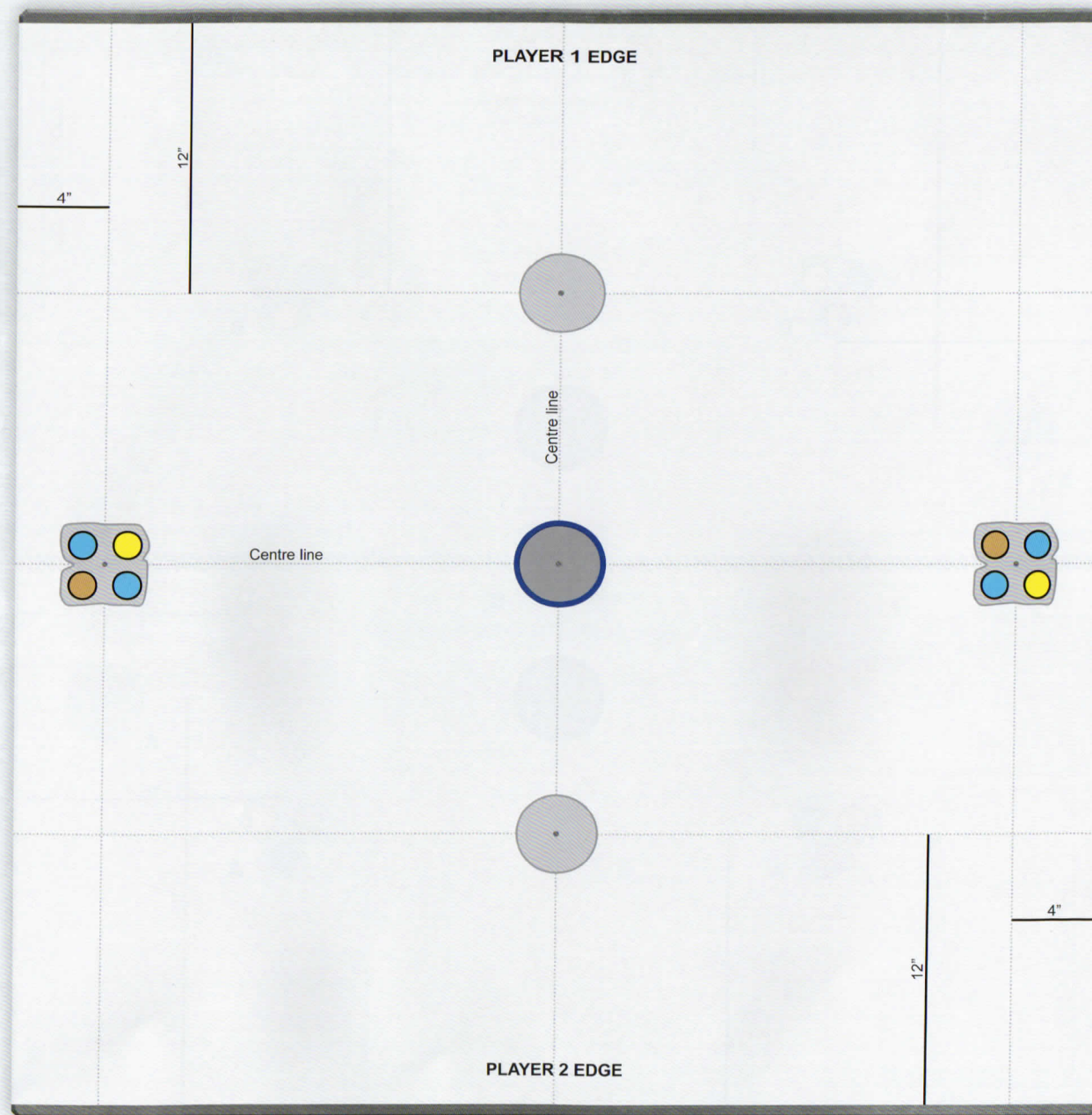
Suggested Approach: Distant

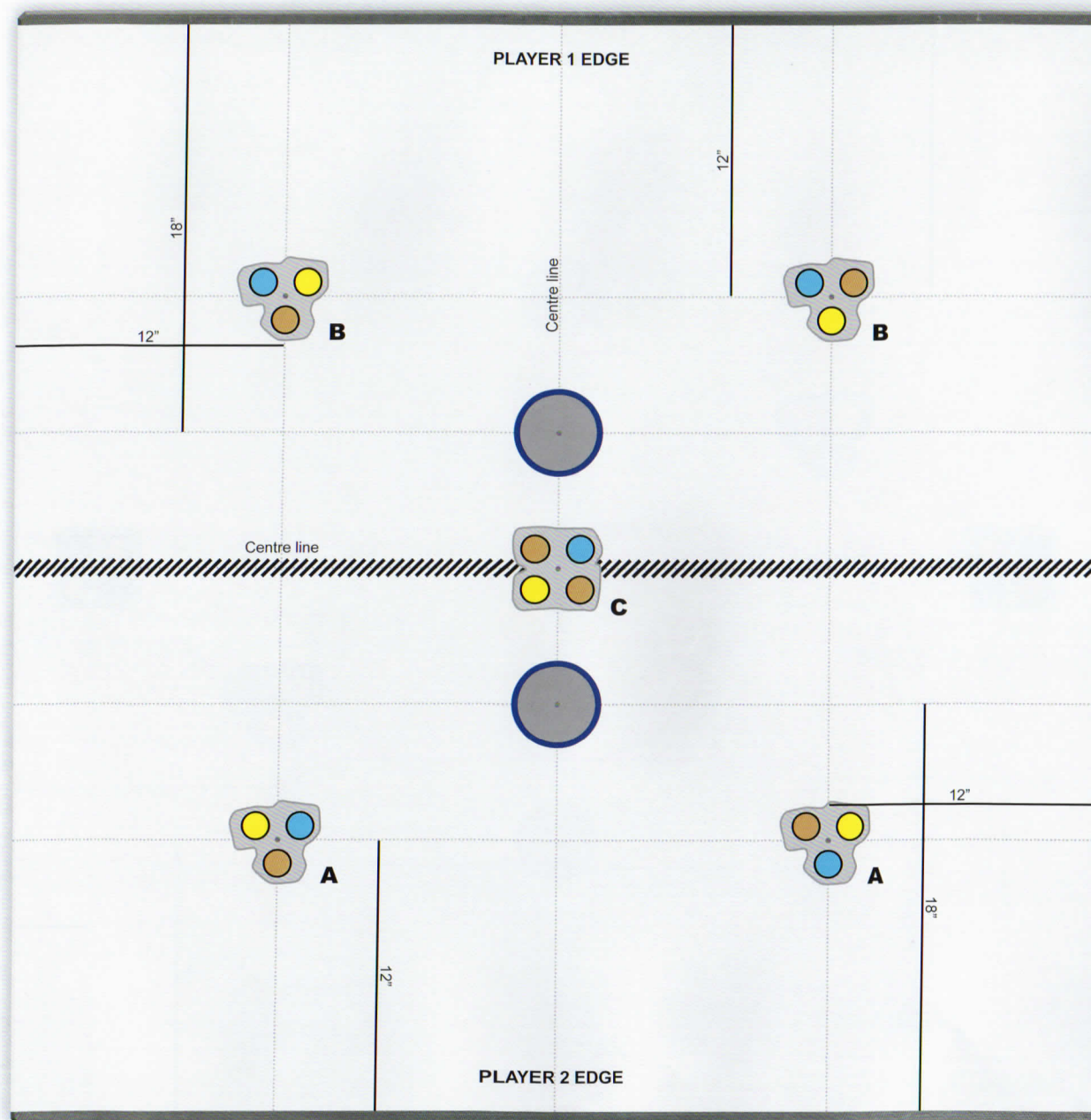
Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-5 Fine, 4-6 Dense)

Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations), Space Stations (Critical Locations). The Space Stations are all armed with 1 x Burnthrough armament and 1 x Close Action armament.

Variant: The two Critical Locations in the clusters are worth double Victory Points





SCENARIO 3 ERUPTING BATTLEFRONT

What seemed like a Recon skirmish was in reality the prelude to a fleet sized engagement, with the foe making a play for key sectors on the surface. Capture and hold them quickly; your reinforcements are en-route, but so are the enemy's...

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

Suggested Approach: Rapid Reaction

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Planetary Ring

Victory Conditions:

Player 1: Gains 1vp for each Sector in B Clusters destroyed, B Clusters are Critical Locations and A Clusters follow standard scoring.

Player 2: Gains 1vp for each Sector in A Clusters destroyed, A Clusters are also Critical Locations and B Clusters follow standard scoring.

Both Players: C Clusters and Space Stations (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations)

Variant: Replace 2 of the Sectors in the central Cluster with Orbital Guns

SCENARIO 4 STATION ASSAULT

This planet sports a highly complex and deadly set of orbital defences that are ready to be turned against the enemy. Seize them and put their fearsome weaponry to good use against the oncoming foe before they can return the favour!

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

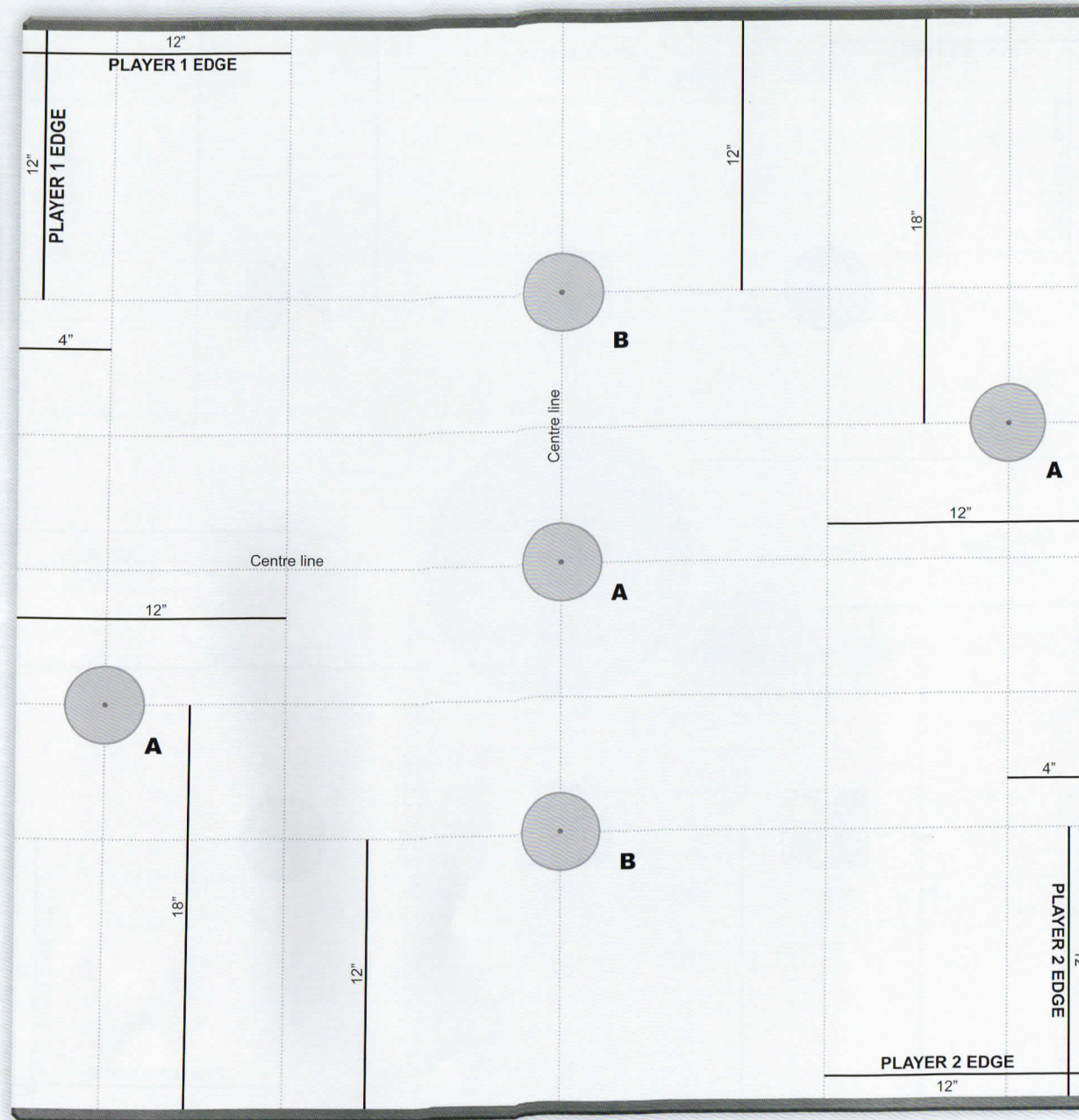
Suggested Approach: Battle Line

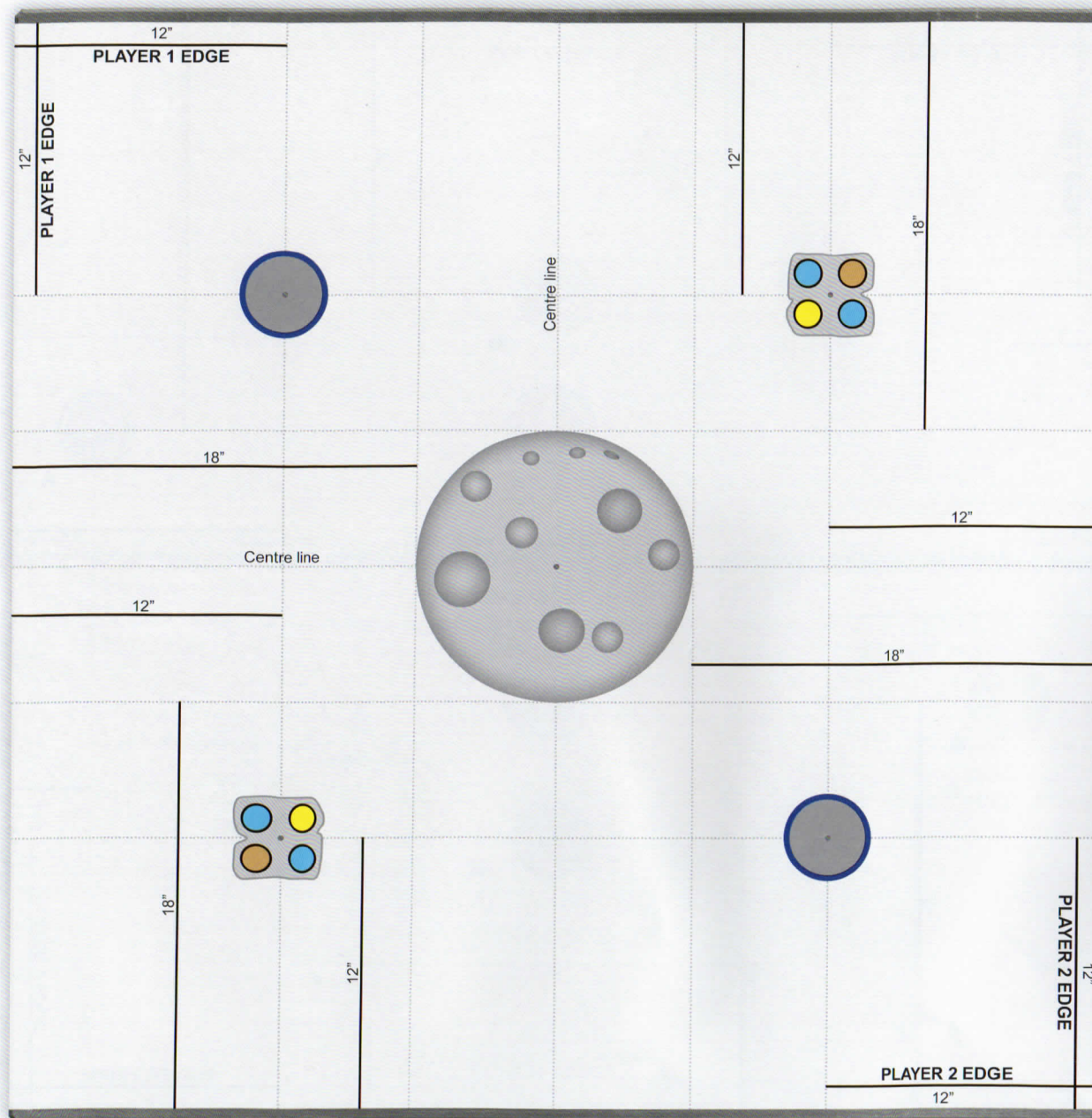
Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-5 Fine, 4-6 Dense)

Victory Conditions: Space Stations score as Medium Clusters, B Space Stations Score as Medium Clusters and Critical Locations

Variant: Armed Space Stations! All A Space Stations are armed with 1 Mass Driver armament and 1 Close Action armament. All B Space Stations are armed with 1 Burnthrough armament and 1 Close Action armament.





SCENARIO 5 MOONSHOT

Operations in strategically useful cities on the ground have been hampered by the presence of a large solid object in orbit, allowing light enemy fleets to engage in hit and run attacks and use piratical tactics. Such a physical impediment to orbital combat must not be used by the enemy to delay conquest of the surface. Hold the space stations and ground support clusters close to it to deny the adversary this advantage.

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

Suggested Approach: Battle Line

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (0-2 Fine, 2-4 Dense), LSO (12" Diameter)

Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations), Space Stations (Score as Medium Clusters and Critical Locations). In addition, players are awarded Victory Points for the following Kill Points

Kill Points	Victory Points
500+	2
750+	3
1000+	5

Variant: Make the LSO 18" in diameter

SCENARIO 6 GRID CONTROL

Central to command's plan for the region and holding onto this planet is a complex grid of defence weapons, manufacturing areas and military complexes. Approach these important clusters and either control them or pound them to dust to deny them to the enemy.

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

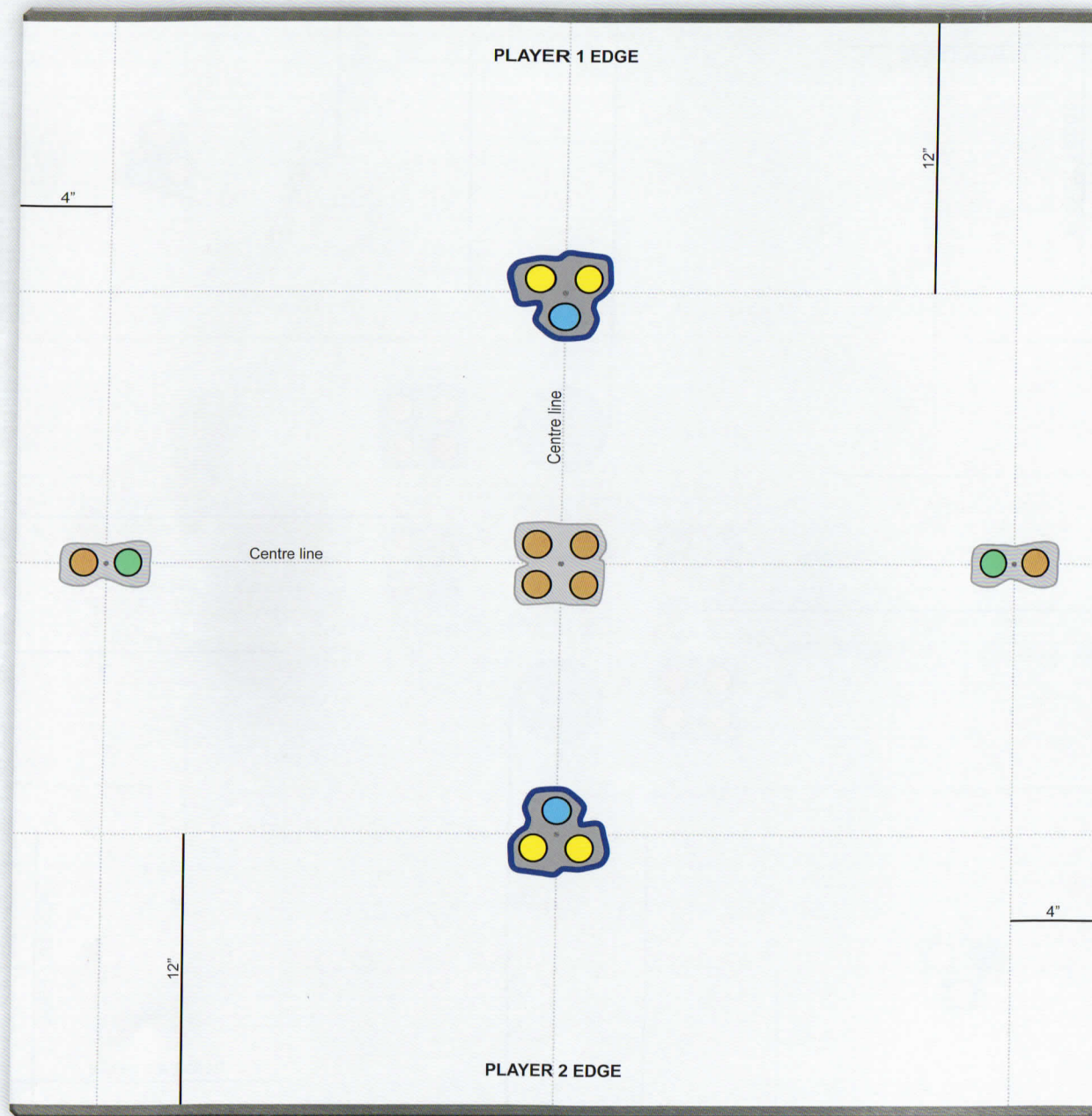
Suggested Approach: Column

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-5 Fine, 4-6 Dense)

Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations), Clash and Battle Clusters (Score double as Clusters and Critical Locations)

Variant: Replace Central Cluster with a Large Space Station with 4 Burnthrough Armaments. Additionally, replace Clash and Battle Clusters with Medium Space Stations with 2 Mass Driver armaments.





SCENARIO 7 POWER GRAB

This region's main weakness is intermittent and shifting power supply, often generated by unstable power sources. Holding these generators could deliver the whole region, but denying them to the opposing forces is the long term aim, one way or another.

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

Suggested Approach: Column

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-8 Fine, 6-10 Dense)

Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations). Clusters Containing Power Plants are worth double Victory Points but nothing if the Power Plant is Destroyed.

Variant: Remove the Debris Fields and place a Planetary Ring Vertically through the centre of the table.

SCENARIO 8 DEFENCE RELAY

The heavily defended Defence Relay in the area grants a huge advantage to opposing fleets, not least because of the highly advanced comms sectors interlinked with its systems. Capture them and the associated space stations to gain the upper hand in this region of space over the planet.

Players: 2

Fleet List: Standard

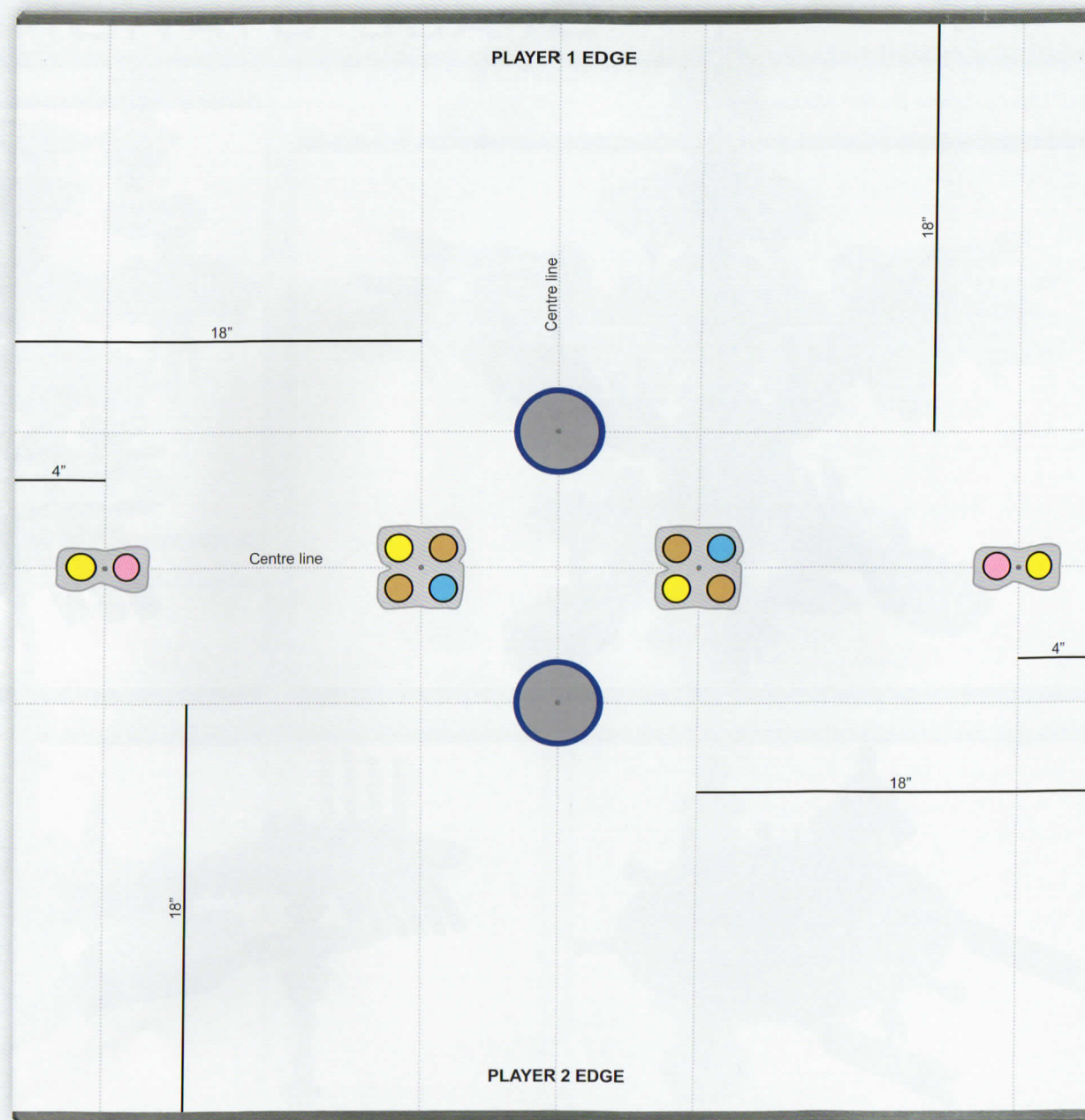
Suggested Approach: Column

Duration: 6 Turns

Orbital Debris: Debris Fields (2-5 Fine, 4-6 Dense)

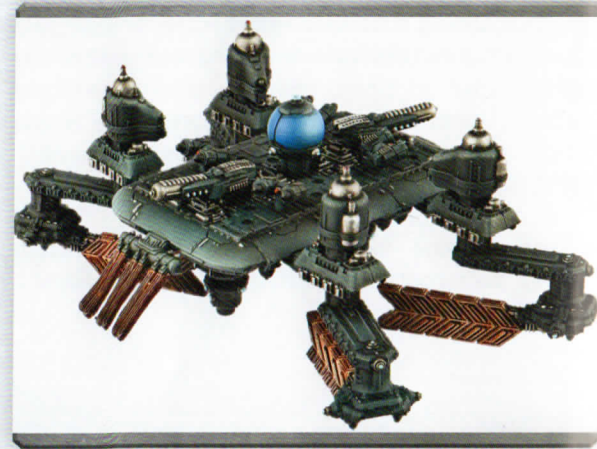
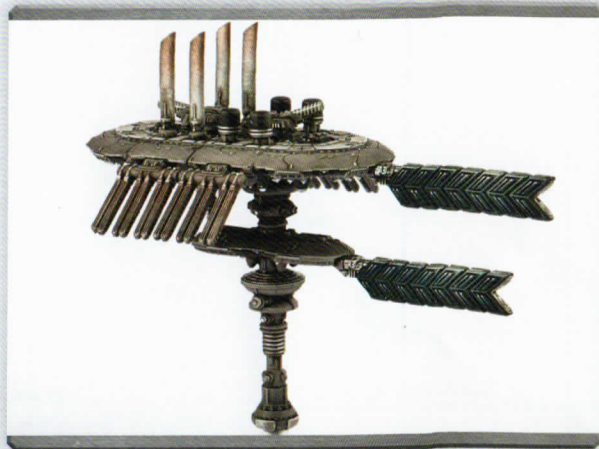
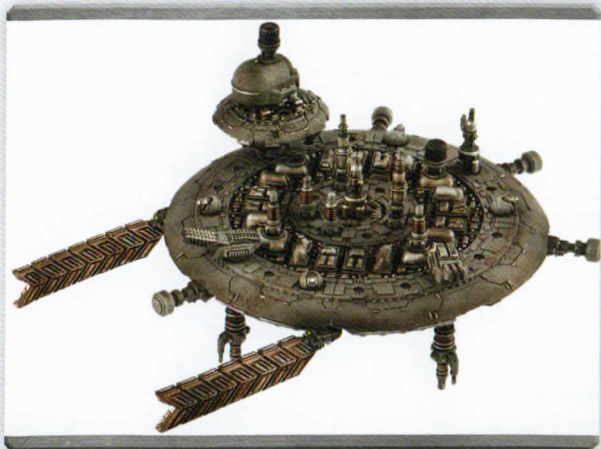
Victory Conditions: Clusters (Standard Scoring, Critical Locations), Space Stations (Score as Medium Clusters, Critical Locations). You lose 4 Victory Points for destroying a Comms Station Sector, however if you control a Comms Station Sector on turn 6 then you gain an additional 5 Victory Points for each one you control. The Space Stations are each armed with 1 Burnthrough armament, 1 Mass Driver armament and 1 Close Action Armament.

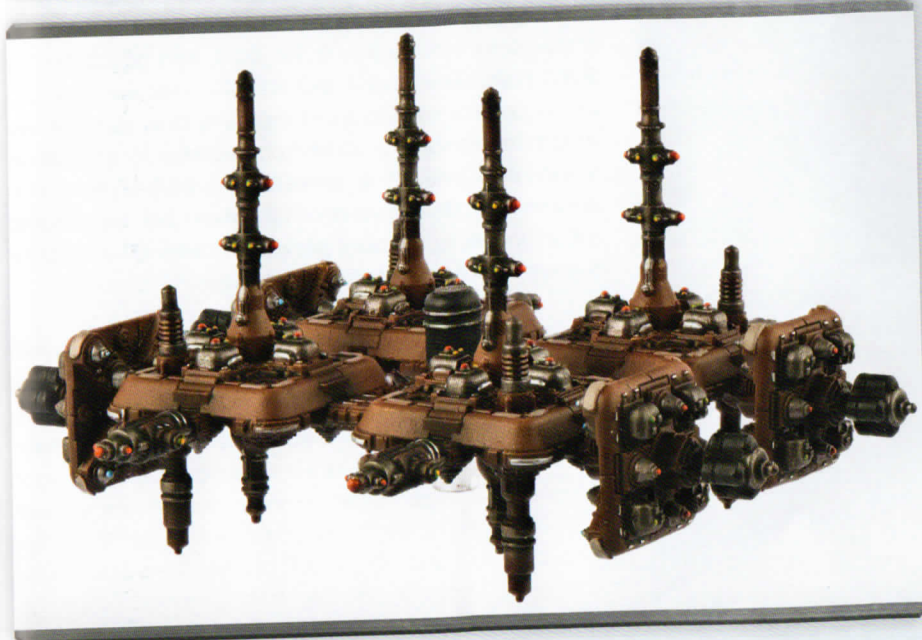
Variant: Replace the Space Stations with Medium Clusters, each containing 1 Orbital Defence Sector and 2 Military Sectors.



SPACE STATIONS

Made from the Space Station Modular Pack.



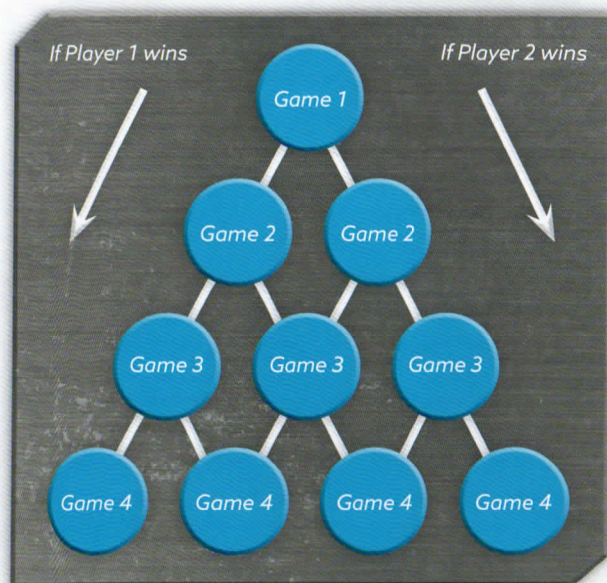


WAYS TO PLAY

DROPFLEET COMMANDER CAMPAIGNS

While stand alone and tournament games of Dropfleet Commander make for great experiences, many players want to build games together into overarching storylines and campaigns. There are many ways to do so, but one of the most successful and balanced is the tree campaign.

Following the matrix below, assign one of the players to be **Player 1** and the other **Player 2**. You may choose to make one attacking and the other defending also, which will add character and flavour to your games, creating a different set of games depending upon which player wins and which loses.



Creating narrative for these ties the games together, giving further purpose and direction to the campaign. The first thing you will need to decide on is a background for your campaign and the factions you will be using. This could influence the kind of games you play; are you in orbit around Olympus, fighting over the shipyards with the other factions? Are you supporting a ground assault on Elysium by the Shaltari, while the PHR are attempting to stop you at all costs? Are you desperately defending Ferrum with UCM fleets while the Scourge try to land troops on the ground?

With this in mind you can choose missions and scenarios that represent each phase of the campaign and that react to who has won the previous game. By using the balanced scenarios provided this will give equal opportunities and aims for each player, ensuring fair games. However, for such a campaign you may wish to design some 'Attacker-Defender' style scenarios for a different narrative element at the expense of some competitiveness.

With each win or loss, advance down the tree to the next scenario, guided by who the winner is. For fairness, each round is individually balanced and not directly affected by the previous round. Crucially, this does not give any advantage to the winner of the previous game, preventing a situation where the same player is aided by the campaign system to win every game. Final victory or defeat is however determined by the number of victories – every win or loss counts!

TOURNAMENT PLAY

Hawk Wargames will be running official tournaments for Dropfleet Commander. The game is designed to be fully balanced for competitive play in typical tournament conditions. An updated and free to download tournament pack, providing up-to-date guidance, assistance and frameworks for tournament organisers, will be available each year.

The exact format of tournaments will vary considerably based on venue, player numbers and time restrictions and should be detailed by the tournament organiser ahead of the event.

The downloadable tournament pack will cover everything players and tournament organisers need in detail beyond the details in this book. In brief, the recommended size for a tournament level game is 1,500pts, with games lasting 2.5-3 hours, and played on a 4' x 4' table. Any scenario in this book is suitable for competitive play, although we would recommend a variety of missions to encourage varied fleets. Hawk Wargames uses a 20-0 style scoring system for official tournaments (which will be detailed further in the tournament pack), but many other popular scoring systems can easily be used.

Tournament play is an excellent way to hone your skills, learn new rules, and get some solid gaming time in! It provides a strong focus for gameplay while also encouraging you to be more creative and inventive when forming your fleet.

INTEGRATING DROPFLEET COMMANDER WITH DROPZONE COMMANDER

The Dropfleet Commander universe is a dangerous place, filled with massed fleet battles, orbit insertion drops under enemy fire, and rapid deployment city fighting in the decaying ruins of the Cradle Worlds. While *Dropfleet Commander* (DFC) gives players the chance to fight for control of vast areas of each planet and the orbit above them, the 10mm scale game *Dropzone Commander* (DZC) focuses on battles in the city sectors themselves; where players are vying for control of key areas, extracting objectives and destroying each other's ground forces face to face.

While both games can be played in an evening, narratively the time scales involved are very different. An orbital firefight and drop operations would take several hours, and each ground combat is a battlefield all on its own. Even the largest DZC games take in only a small (but pivotal) part of these combats, which means that direct, side-by-side games of both systems might not gel perfectly, due to a range of factors such as time and scale.

To illustrate this, a single UCM New Orleans class strike carrier (a small ship in DFC) carries over 100 dropships, containing hundreds of armoured vehicles and one thousand Legionnaires, making a 1:1 style comparison extremely problematic! However, DZC games can represent a crucial element of a much larger ground battle, and will certainly be affected by events in the void above!

The game systems are designed to be played in conjunction with each other in several different ways, allowing players to use both rulesets consecutively or concurrently. Players are encouraged to find more ways of playing the games together to get even more depth from both systems. What follows are several recommended ways of linking the games. Which one is most appropriate will depend on time and space available, number of players, narrative angle and personal choice, amongst other factors.



NARRATIVE CAMPAIGNS

One of the best ways of linking the two gaming systems is to run them as part of a campaign. Campaigns are great for giving background to the battlegrounds you fight over, and can also be expanded to include more than two players, with alliances of players fighting each round for set goals.

Applying a background also lets you define your playing areas – if over Olympus, you might include more space stations in your *Dropfleet Commander* games and the 'airless' and 'low grav' Environmental Rules in your *Dropzone Commander* games (found in 'Reconquest: Phase 2'). If fighting on a planet like Elysium, more farmland will be used, with a different playing mat aesthetic or possibly more dispersed or fewer clusters in your orbital games to represent this.

Due to the strong narrative element, this type of integration will require more work beforehand, although inventiveness and effort will be rewarded by creating a better and more immersive campaign! Hawk Wargames will also publish official versions of such campaigns in print and online in the future.

Once you have the background decided, you'll need to organise the type of campaign you'll play. There are many to choose from, but we've added two examples.



Linear Campaigns

Linear campaigns have set games which you play, in a set order, no matter who wins or loses. Campaign points are taken from each game, and an overall winner decided from this. The wins or losses will also change what can happen in game. For example winning a game of *Dropzone Commander* that includes an orbital laser might mean that the winner may be able to place some ground based defence batteries or some infantry units in certain sectors before the next game of *Dropfleet Commander* starts. Slight bonuses like this are great ways of linking games, as it means that there is incentive to win as it will impact the next game, but not in a way that will break the mechanics or vastly unbalance the game.

Linear campaigns could look like the example below.

In this example, games interact with each other in a narrative context outlined following:

- The first game would be Take & Hold at skirmish level. This would represent the lead expeditionary forces above the planet inserting recon elements to the surface. The winner would receive +1 to their initiative rolls in the next game in this linear campaign as a reward, which would affect the second game (*Dropzone Commander*).

- The second game (*Dropzone Commander*) would also be a small Skirmish sized game, using the Recon Scenario - reconnaissance forces scouting the ground before attack. The winner of this game would receive -1 to their Command Values for each battlegroup in the third game, (*Dropfleet Commander*).
- The third game would be a Clash size DFC game, using the Mixed Engagement scenario. The winner of this could, for example, get to re-draw their command cards in the first turn of the fourth game in this linear campaign.

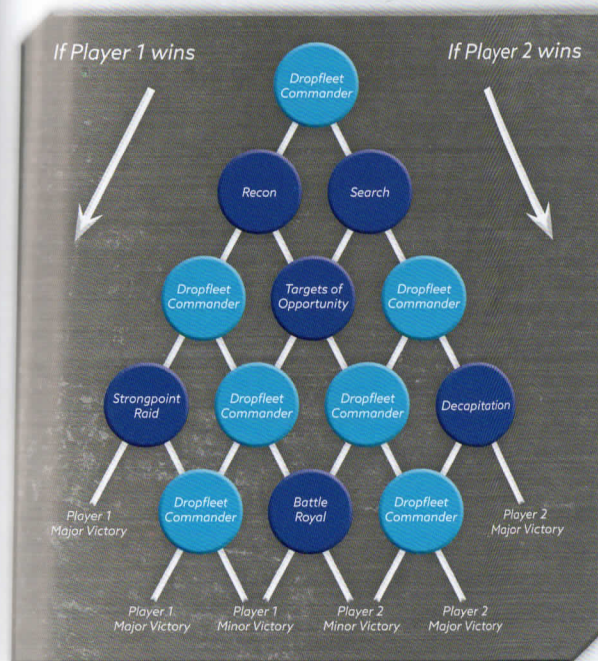
The campaign would continue like this, building in size and scope until the final cataclysmic battle in orbit for control of the whole planet! This makes this style perfect for 'escalation' style campaigns. Choose characterful and narrative bonuses for the winner of each game to carry into the next, with the campaign as a whole decided by overall victory points.

In addition, environmental effects and additional scenery could be added depending on the result of the previous game(s). For example, if over a certain threshold (e.g. 1000pts) of ships were destroyed in a *Dropfleet Commander* game, then the next *Dropzone Commander* game could use the 'Orbital Debris' environmental rule, representing bits of ruined starship crashing into the battlefield with earth shattering force!



Tree Campaigns

Tree campaigns work in a similar way, with winners given bonuses to take into the next game (or losers penalised in a small way), but for the most part the outcome of the battle is more important for dictating which game is played next:



Tree campaigns work well with players, again these could be assigned as an Attacking and a Defending player. They will not always be an attacker or defender in the game scenario, but for the purposes of the Campaign they could be labelled as such – e.g. the UCM would be the Attacking force in a campaign based around Eden Prime, with the Scourge as the Defender, or the Shaltari might be Defending on Aaru with the PHR Attacking.

In this way the campaign unfolds, creating narrative and different games and outcomes; for example, if playing on Eden Prime, with Player 1 being the UCM and Player 2



being the Scourge, If the UCM win three games, they can end up playing Strongpoint Assault, where they attack the final Scourge Stronghold in New Troy. However if the Scourge win three games, they will end up playing Decapitation, with the UCM player as the Defender in that mission – clearly the assault has gone badly wrong, and the invading forces of the UCM are being mopped-up by the victorious Scourge.

There are a multitude of combinations, but which games you choose to play and where they are placed in the campaign tree are best linked with a strong narrative idea for your campaign.

As with the Dropfleet tree campaign outlined earlier, the advantage of this type of campaign is that each individual mission is balanced and not generally affected directly by the previous game, ensuring that the previous winner isn't given a bonus leading to consecutive victories!

CAMPAIGN DAYS

Another way of playing linked games is to have a campaign day with several players. In this way you can link the games in real time (with some blurring of actual time scales used).

In this example set up, players are divided into teams. (For your first or smaller campaigns we suggest keeping this to two factions, but as you create larger campaign days you can expand to three or more factions.) Each team has one or two Dropfleet Commander players, with at least double that amount of Dropzone Commander Players. In this example, each team has one Dropfleet Commander and three Dropzone Commander players.

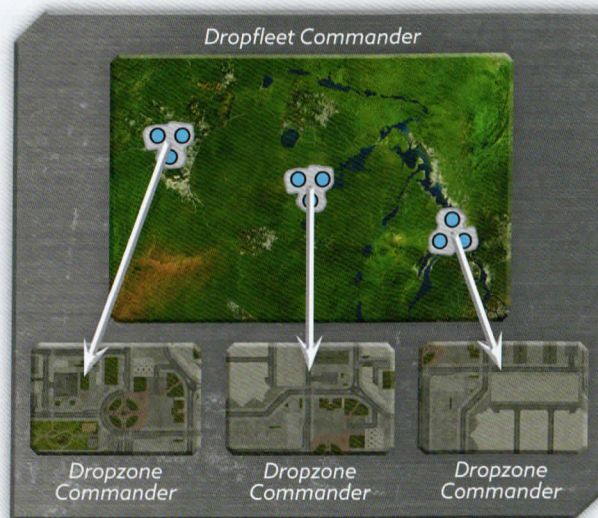
The Campaign takes place over a set number of rounds: Three if it is a one day event, Five if over two days, or more if the size of the event increases further. During each round, the Dropfleet Commander table is the centre of operations. Before the round starts, each Dropzone Commander table is nominated as one cluster on the Dropfleet table. Games on all the tables play out as usual, with a few differences, (detailed as follows).

Bombardment:

If a player on the Dropfleet Commander table damages a Sector in the Cluster with a Bombardment weapon, they can do damage to the associated table. Stop the Dropfleet and relevant Dropzone games for a moment, no matter what stage they are at. The bombarding Dropfleet player may then place three large blast templates anywhere on the board, with the following weapons profile:

WEAPON	E	SH	AC	R(F)	R(C)	MF	ARC	SPECIAL
BOMBARDMENT	13	1	6++	∞	∞	N/A	N/A	AREA-L, DEVASTATOR-3, DEMOLISHER-3, FROM ORBIT

From Orbit: If the blast does not hit, do not scatter it as usual. Instead, scatter the blast 2D6 inches in a random direction – firing at things from orbit is not an exact science without sophisticated and planned targeting!



Reinforcement:

If a player on the Dropfleet Commander table lands troops of any kind in a cluster, they can reinforce the associated Dropzone Commander table. For each turn that troops are dropped into that Cluster, the team member on the associated table gets reinforcements. At the start of the next turn on the Dropzone Commander table the team member with the reinforcements gains a squad of standard units. This joins their HQ Battlegroup (if they have more than one, they can choose which the squad joins).

The squad is as follows:

- **UCM:** 3x Sabres with a Condor
- **Scourge:** 3x Hunters with a Marauder
- **PHR:** 2x Ares with a Neptune
- **Shaltari:** 3x Tomahawks (count as being dematerialised)

If players are substituting Resistance, or using them on a team with a different faction for Dropfleet, they receive:

- **Feral Resistance:** 1x Barrel Bomber
- **Allied Resistance:** 1x Archangel Pathfinder

Defence Fire:

Players should aim to have at least one Dropzone Commander table with an Orbital Defence Laser either to one side of the table (equidistant from the player's board edges) or in the centre. If a player has infantry in the defence laser, with no enemy infantry in the same laser, they may fire the laser at the Dropfleet Commander table (representing control of a larger battery beyond the scope of the table). At the end of the turn on the Dropzone Commander table, stop the relevant Dropfleet Commander game for a moment, no matter what stage they are at. If there is an enemy team's ship within 12" of any part of the Cluster, the Dropzone team member may fire at it with the following profile:

WEAPON	LOCK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	ARC	SPECIAL
HEAVY GROUND DEFENCE FIRE	3+	2	2	F/S/R	ESCAPE VELOCITY

To give all players a chance to play both games and to vary scenarios, it is suggested that players play Erupting Battlefield on the Dropfleet Commander table, and a mix of Targets of Opportunity, Recon, Search, and Battle Royale on the Dropzone Commander tables. Players should rotate which table they are on, with the scenario on the table staying the same – this gives everyone a chance to fire the orbital defence laser, bombard another table, and get or give reinforcements to any of the Dropzone Commander tables.

The campaign winners are the team with the most VPs overall, from all the games played. This means that tactics that might not be ideal in your own game are worthwhile as they help someone on your team more; maybe deploying troops in a certain cluster won't win the battle, but will help another in your team win theirs; maybe rushing for the defence laser will cause a draw in your game, but allow you to help out the Dropfleet player who is behind in their game.

TWO PLAYER TIME-LAPSE CAMPAIGN

A third way of playing with the two systems is to directly link them over two tables. This is best played over a weekend or consecutive days with only two players (although simply doubling up and using 4 players would also work). This timeframe will also vary, as depending on the ongoing results and actions in the Dropfleet Commander game, there will be different numbers of Dropzone Commander games.



In Time-Lapse campaigns, the ground combat in the Dropfleet Commander game is played out in Dropzone Commander Scenarios. When you would normally work out the results of a ground combat in Dropfleet Combat, instead play a game of DZC. If one player deployed in a sector for a full turn before the other player entered it, play an Attacker/Defender scenario, with the first player to deploy being the Defender. If both players deployed into the sector at the same time, play a standard scenario.

The size of games will be determined by the number of troops that the players have deployed into the sectors (note that these are elements from a larger battle - a single Dropfleet Commander infantry token is a lot more than 300 points of Dropzone Commander models!):

- 1 Infantry token = 300 points of Dropzone Commander units
- 1 Armour token = 500 points of Dropzone Commander units
- 1 Battery token = 200 points of Dropzone Commander units

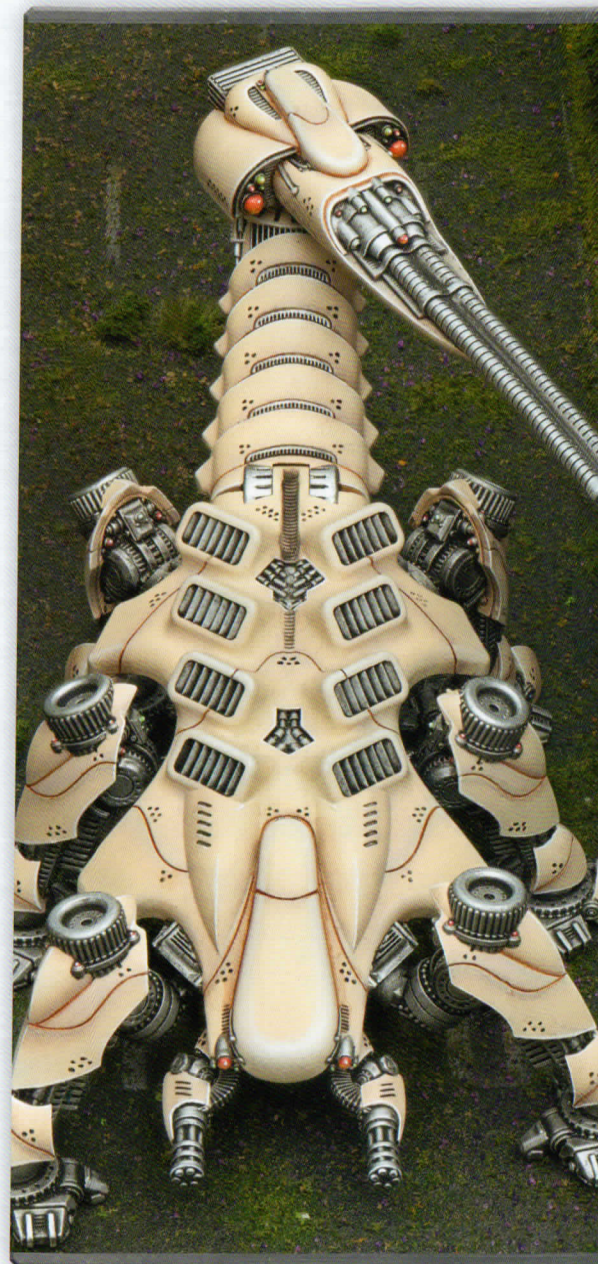
Games should be played at the level of the highest points player (i.e. if one player has 1500 points and the other has 2000, play a 'Battle' sized game etc).

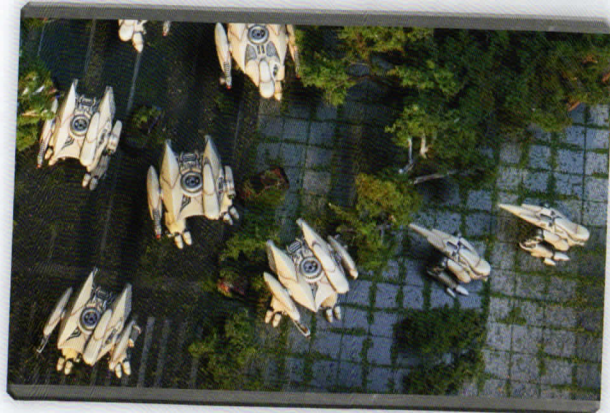
The results of the Dropzone Commander game are then transferred to the Dropfleet Commander game. The overall Victory Points difference determines how many units are destroyed (see *Dropzone Commander, Reconquest: Phase 1* for details on scoring). The number of victory points are listed below, along with the damage done to the opposing side.

- **Major win: (20 - 16 points)** – You may destroy 5 enemy tokens of your choice
- **Win: (15 - 12 points)** – You may destroy 3 enemy tokens of your choice
- **Draw: (11 - 9 points)** – You may destroy 2 enemy tokens of your choice
- **Loss: (8 - 5 points)** – You may destroy 1 enemy token of your choice
- **Major Loss: (4 - 0 points)** – The enemy destroys 1 of their own tokens, of their choice.

In addition, causing massive casualties on the opposing side (even if losing) can help with the overall war effort. Destroying half of the enemy's total points in a game (no matter the result) allows you to destroy 1 enemy token of your choice.

Players then move on to the next ground combat, or if they are all resolved, return to the game of DFC until the next ground combat would take place.







SHALTARI SPECIAL RULES

Special Rule - Shaltari Shields

All Shaltari combat vessels are equipped with highly advanced all-encompassing energy fields that can be raised in anticipation of enemy fire or lowered in favour of stealth.

At the start of any friendly Shaltari battlegroup's activation, ships in that battlegroup can choose to raise their shields. Once raised, the shields must remain raised until the battlegroup next activates where the Shaltari player can choose to deactivate the shields (or keep them raised). Once the shields have been raised the ship may use its Passive Countermeasures until the controlling player chooses to deactivate the shields.

Due to the vast power output of the shields, the ship must now use the larger signature value in its profile (the lower signature value is used when the shields are down - note that most Shaltari ships have two signature values as a result of this rule). Additionally, the ship's basic Point Defence value is reduced to 0 while the shields are up, although modifiers (such as those made by escorting fighters) still apply. The ship may not choose the Silent Running special order while shields are up.

Special Rule - Shield Booster

Once per turn when a friendly ship within 4" of a ship with this rule is targeted by an enemy ship, the friendly ship may re-roll all failed Passive Countermeasure saves caused by all attack dice allocated in a single enemy group allocation (note that this rule only applies when the friendly ship's shields are raised). In order to be affected, ships must be on the same orbital layer as the ship with this rule, additionally the ship with this rule can choose to target itself.

Special Rule - Shaltari Ground Asset Deployment

The Shaltari deploy their ground forces in a very different way to other, less advanced races. Instead of risking their troops directly in a hazardous descent while physically present aboard dropships, they employ an interconnected web of teleport gates to transfer from a distant ship in orbit directly to the surface. That way, only the gate's crew are at risk on approach rather than the whole payload of warriors. This fabulously advanced technology also brings with it the added benefit of being able to transfer forces on the ground between combat zones in the blink of an eye.

Motherships (which physically house the troops) provide the fulcrum of this technology while smaller Voidgates (the equivalent of Strike Carriers) and Gates (the equivalent of dropships) provide the point of entry to the battlefield. The latter is required as this technology requires a Gate to be physically present very near to the point of materialisation.

In games of Dropfleet, this works in a similar way to the ground asset deployment of less advanced races. However some special rules are needed, which are described below:



Motherships and Gates:

Motherships are the origin point for ground troops and these are physically carried aboard them. As such, they have a Launch capacity in same way as the troopships of other races and they use the same rules for when they may launch. Motherships are identified as ships that have the option to launch Gates. Gates are a special type of Strike Craft unique to the Shaltari and use the same rules as dropships. If Gates are being launched, refer to the rules below.

Voidgates:

Voidgates are a stepping stone between the Mothership in orbit and the small, dropship-like Gates. Since Gates cannot deploy directly from space, a Voidgate is needed to enter the atmosphere and provide a point of entry for them.

When a Mothership is launching Gates, they are NOT deployed from the Mothership itself. Instead, they are deployed from Voidgates. A Voidgate will have a Voidgate Capacity (Voidgate-X) in its special rules, which represents how many Gate tokens may be deployed through it each turn (note that this is frequently lower than the launch value of Motherships, meaning that you generally need multiple Voidgates to make full use of a Mothership's potential Launch capacity). In order to do this, the Voidgate must be within 18" of the Mothership OR within 18" of another Voidgate that is in turn within 18" of the Mothership. You may have more than 2 Voidgates in this chain as long as it is unbroken. Only the Capacity of the Voidgate deploying the Gates is used if multiple Voidgates are chained in this way.

Voidgates and Charged Air:

The eldritch technologies and incredible energies involved in this process also have an offensive side effect - the air surrounding such constructs is loaded with energetic potential, ready to annihilate smaller enemy craft that get too close. If a Voidgate is within 6" of a Cluster then that Cluster counts as having a Defence Battery deployed in it when enemy Dropships or Bulklanders are deploying ground assets. However, Bulk Landers are destroyed on a 4+ rather than the usual 3+.

Voidgates and Ground Asset Relocation:

Voidgates can also be used to relocate ground assets once deployed. During the Ground Combat step of the Roundup Phase you may use nearby Voidgates to enhance the movement abilities of you existing ground forces.

Ground asset tokens in Sectors within 3" of a Voidgate in Atmosphere may be moved to another sector within 3" of another Voidgate in Atmosphere anywhere else on the table. If the token is being moved to a Sector within a cluster containing an enemy Defence Battery, that token is destroyed on a roll of 6+.

Any number of tokens may be moved by a single Voidgate in this way as the power requirements are far lower than a new deployment from orbit and this does not count towards the Voidgate's Capacity. This token counts as not being present in the new Sector for the remainder of the turn.

