

A VESSEL GAME BY SAMUEL E H YEAGER

STARSHIP

A role-playing game of exploration, missions, and cooperation among the vast and varied stars.

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CHAPTER 1: ENGINE CHECK

THE SHIP ITSELF

STARSHIP is a role-playing game. To play this one, you need friends (at least three, and yourself), dice (six-sided, enough for every player to have at least eight), pencils (one for every player), and paper (plenty for everyone). When you sit down at the table to play, or when you're planning when you'll meet, decide which of the players will be the Game Master (or GM). This player will be in charge of narrating much of the world, bringing threats to bear against the other players, and deciding how difficult to overcome those threats will be. The other players at the table will narrate the actions of their characters, and just their characters. They describe how they interact with the world around them, and they roll their dice to see how effective they are.

Through the course of your adventure, your crew will come upon challenges that demand they risk life, limb, and legend to succeed. When something threatens the crew, or when any member of the crew decides to do something risky, the GM notes the beginning of an encounter. During an encounter, each character has a pool of dice to draw from so that they can take action. The character's stats determine how many times they can call upon the power of that stat in an encounter. For instance, a character with strength of 5 can act in a way that uses their strength 5 times in an encounter, while a character with only 3 can only call on their strength 3 times. The goal, in a person-to-person encounter, is to gain enough successful efforts that the foe or obstacle is overcome (this goal, the "threshold", is a secret number predetermined by the GM. Higher thresholds mean tougher encounters.) In ship-to-ship encounters, such as skirmishes or chases, specific scores (as outlined in Chapter 4) decide success.

When a character acts in an encounter, the GM will ask the player to describe that action, and, if unclear, which stat they're hoping to call on in that action. Then, the GM will ask the player to roll one d6. If the result is a 4 or higher, they succeed in doing what they hoped to do, although if this doesn't yet meet the threshold, consequences may be incurred. The GM should mark down a success for that player, as each player must reach the threshold individually to make it through an encounter totally whole. If the result is a 3 or lower, they have failed, and immediate consequences, at the GM's discretion, take place. In either case, the player marks that they have spent one of their available dice from the stat upon which they called.

If a character rolls enough successes to meet the threshold for the encounter, the GM will let them know. They can then take further actions, rolling dice that they have left, risking further consequences either to aid their comrades in need or increase their own glory.

After every player has either expended every chance for success, or has met the threshold, the GM narrates the end of the encounter. If every player has enough successes to match or surpass their threshold, the crew overcomes the obstacle. Should any fail, the GM narrates the consequences of coming up short. The greater the degree of failure, the greater the consequence, so every successful die counts, even if you don't get exactly what you want.

Tips for running the game: Consider the challenges of your obstacles. A threshold of one should be easy for anyone who is competent. A threshold of five is a real challenge. A threshold of nine is impossible for all but the most favored of the gods. Also, consider the varying degrees of failure. If all but one of the crew succeeds at a challenge, perhaps their goal is met, but at a price. If all but one of the crew meets with failure, perhaps they just narrowly avoid absolute catastrophe.

There is a second challenge system here as well, that decides the results of Ship against Ship contests, such as skirmishes, chases, and electronic warfare. The rules for these encounters are found in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 2: A TINY SPARK IN THE VOID

NAME, OCCUPATION, HOMEWORLD?

Now that you understand the core of the game, you can prepare to set off on your adventure. The next step is to create your characters. Firstly, you need to know your character's strengths and weaknesses, or their Stats. There are four core statistics to know:

Strength: Lifting, loading, and the power behind your punches.

Speed: Quickness on the trigger, the sticks, and your feet.

Endurance: How cool you are under pressure, metaphorical or physical.

Cunning: Wit, charm, and logic.

To decide the numbers behind these powers, roll six d6, rerolling any results of 1, and then cut out both the highest and the lowest numbers. This will leave you with four results, which you then place in each Stat as you see fit.

In addition to the four core Stats, your shared ship itself has stats to track, the values of which are decided by its class (we'll get to that soon). Enemy ships and objects in space also have values in each of these scores. As GM, make sure you know these scores for every enemy you put before the players.

HULL: This stat is shared between every Player, and represents the structural integrity of your Starship. If this is your first session of STARSHIP, your HULL score is 20. This might increase or decrease as time goes on. Should this ever get to 0, your ship is destroyed.

DRIVE: This represents the speed of your vessel, and how fast it can close a distance to a target, or how quick it can make an escape. When you make a check that includes escaping, catching up, or racing, use this score to decide how fast you're going. (A non-mobile object in space has drive of 0.) This starts at 1.

POWER: This represents the firepower of your vessel, and how much damage it can deal. When you make a check that uses your ship to deal damage to a target, this value is the amount of damage you deal. This starts at 1.

ELECTRONICS: This represents the power of your vessel's radar, communications, anti-hacking defenses, and jamming arrays. When you make a check to jam enemy

communications, hack systems, this measures the control you exhibit over your target's systems, should you break in. This starts at 1.

After deciding your scores, you choose your own character's position on the ship. This decides a little of your character's personality, their role in the crew, and gives a bonus to two of their Stats.

Additionally, should you find a way to justifiably tie in the answer of any of those background questions to a challenge, your GM may reward you! Anything from a reduced difficulty to a guaranteed pass with leftover successes could be your reward, so make it count. Once you resolve that question, make a check next to it and come up with a new one before the next session.

Choose your destiny from the list below:

The Gunner: Quick and observant, you know where your target will be before they do.

Where'd you learn to shoot?

What kind of weaponry is your ship equipped with? Laser cannons? Ballistics? Alien disintegrators?

+1d6 to Power rolls when you are in control of the weapons systems.

The Captain: Everyone looks to you for command, and you provide. Don't let them down.

What did you name the ship? Why?

Why do you, of all people, sit in the captain's chair?

+1 to all die rolls when issuing commands to the crew, finding work for the ship, and parleying with other ships.

The Mechanic: Training and experience have made your hands into healers of metal.

When did you first put on the welder's mask?

What does the engine run on? Nuclear power? Solar power? An unknowable alien matter?

+1 to all die results when maintaining, repairing, or upgrading the ship.

The Pilot: The ship obeys your command, your slightest touch. Make sure you do it right.

Why'd you leave home for this?

What do you call the ship when nobody else is listening?

+1d6 to Drive rolls when you are piloting the ship.

The Medic: The mechanic fixes the ship, you fix the mechanic, and everyone else on this boat.

Where did you get your training? Military? Hospital? Family practice?

Whose life did you save on this ship?

+1 to all die results when doing medical or surgical procedures on the ship.

Once every player has their role picked out, the next choice is the class of ship you'll fly. To begin with, you only have the three following options to choose from, although more classes may become available as your crew grows in wealth and renown. To choose, every player examines the list, and if a consensus is reached, that's the pick. If not, vote, and a majority wins. If still undecided, the Captain picks.

RAPTOR: Sleek and vicious, the raptor is a fighter ship that specializes in hit and run missions. While not the most sturdy, it's fast enough that if you get hit by anything kinetic, you really only have yourself (or your pilot) to blame.

+0 Hull, +2 drive, +0 power, +0 electronics.

ARROWHEAD: Hits hard and moves quick, the Arrowhead is ideal for head on skirmishes. Enough power to put your enemy down fast, enough speed to get you close.

+0 Hull, +0 Drive, +2 Power, +0 Electronics

WATCHTOWER: A comms ship with frontline capabilities, the Watchtower is the one who sits in the middle of the fight, commanding the fighters and jamming enemy communications. You make your friends' lives easier to make your enemies' lives shorter.

+0 Hull, +0 Drive, +0 Power, +2 Electronics

More ships, and upgrades, may become available later in your adventure. It is up to the GM to decide when such upgrades become available, and the cost that they carry. Perhaps they come as reward from a Trade Corp for satisfactory performance. Perhaps a gift from a royal benefactor. Ideally, upgrades and new equipment come around every 2-3 sessions of STARSHIP.

CHAPTER 3: A PIECE OF THE SKY

NOBODY WORKS FOR FREE, NOBODY WORKS FOR NOBODY

Throughout the cosmos, civilization spreads. Whether in the heart of cosmopolitan systems, or on the very edge of charted space, those with power wish to consolidate and wield it. Together, before you begin play, discuss the galaxy in which you dwell, and come up with a list of factions for whom you might wind up working. As the GM, you can choose to offer (or demand) missions of the crew, and the crew may choose to take that work or refuse it, with consequences respective.

Should the mission be agreed upon, from then until the terms of the mission are satisfied, members of the crew can add one d6 to any roll they take to further the mission. While such action should normally be obvious, the crew can always make a case to the GM to prove their intent.

To create the factions, each player and the GM gets to follow these questions, and write down their responses.

By what name is the faction known?

Select two domains, over which they preside, from this list:

Religion, military, mercantile, government, exploration, technology, outlaw.

What is the name of the highest ranking publicly known member?

What is the name of the low-ranking associate the crew is familiar with?

Once these are answered, take a little time to flesh out the image of the faction (corporate? Church? Warband? Pirate league?) and introduce them to the table. Have someone write down each faction and their info.

For example: Maginum Morcoris Limited is a Religious, Mercantile faction, a church-like institution that spans the wealthiest systems. They offer, in exchange for loyalty and frequent donations, the promise of happiness in the next life, and their leader, the Chief Executive Reverend Jeriah Olsdottir is always happy to prove it. They seek always to spread their influence, collect more believers and wealth, and, of course, to silence their critics. To that end, Rector Marian Hugill has contacted the crew with work to be done on MML's behalf.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FLOW OF PLAY

SHIP TO SHIP

When challenges arise, the crew decides how they react, and dice are rolled. We know this, as it is explained in Chapter 1. Specifically, however, STARSHIP seeks to quantify what happens when success or failure is found. When the crew takes the actions listed here, have them roll according to the below instructions, instead of rolling with their personal stats.

The ship, and every enemy, has an amount of damage it can take before it falls apart. When the players' ship lands a hit on an enemy (a successful roll from the ship's weapon systems, for example), they roll 1d6 for every point of Power the ship has. Subtract that total from the enemy ship's Hull.

When the ship tries to catch the enemy, or make an escape, and succeeds in their roll, they roll 1d6 for every point in Drive. If the enemy is fleeing, or chasing, the GM rolls 1d6 for every point in the enemy's Drive. Compare the two. If the player's value is higher, they succeed totally in their effort. If the enemy is higher, they've only gotten close, but requi

When the ship tries to hack the enemy systems, jam their comms, or defend against such efforts, they roll 1d6 for every point in Electronics, and the enemy does the same. The difference decides how much control they get. If the defender is higher, no control is

gained. With a difference of 1 favoring the attacker, communications of the enemy ship can be jammed or halted. With 2, one system can be shut down and must be repaired to function again. With 3 or more, all systems can be shut down, requiring significant emergency repairs.

ENGAGE

You have before you now all you need to play a game of STARSHIP. For the GM, keep in mind how the world changes when your characters act. Every faction has an agenda, and many of those are helped or hindered by the crew's actions. This can create favorable relations, as well as hostile protocols, and the players will have to face those consequences somehow. Keeping track of attitudes that the factions hold, towards each other and towards the players, is a well of potential adventure that can be gone to many times.

I hope you and your friends enjoy the game.

THANKS

KAT

GREG AND CAROL

MY PATRONS