

Star Smashers!

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These rules were written in 60 minutes, in order to create something fun and silly to play. We highly recommend them for use in wargames clubs that have started taking themselves too seriously.

Acknowledgements:

The inspiration for this game came from many years of playing starship combat systems: “Alien Space”, “Cordite and Steel” and “Star Fleet Battles”, to name but a few. With so many of the good old games systems now out of print, it's time to revive the old silly days once more!

Concept

Each player will generally control a single starship. A starship is represented by a silhouette or model mounted within a protractor. Players move their ships about on a tabletop or floor and make a public spectacle of themselves as they attempt to blow the hell out of the other player's ships.

Making your ships

Take a plastic 360° school protractor (purchasable from any stationary store), and glue a starship silhouette upon it. Use one of the silhouettes in the back of these rules, or else draw your own vessels of similar size. Next, attach one end of a 2 metre piece of string or fishing line through the hole at the centre of the protractor, fastening it securely beneath.

For a more complex but pretty look - take your plastic protractor and drill a small hole through its centre, fastening a small nail to jut up through the protractor. Slip a small washer over the nail - and then use the nail as a stalk on which to mount a small starship model (micro machines, “Crusher Joe” kits, “Star blazers” kits etc are perfect!) Tie your string or fishing line to the washer, allowing it to swivel freely around the nail.

Blue tack can be useful during play: Use it to help stick your protractors to the table so that they do not shift and move about during play.

Weapons

There are three sorts of weapons that can be fired.

Angular fire weapons must have an angle of fire recorded for them. A piece of string must be attached to the centre of the firing ship's protractor. Use the string and protractor to determine hit or miss. After guessing and recording the desired angle of fire, stretch out the string and have it cut the firing ship's protractor at the stated angle. If the line of the taut string passes through another vessel's silhouette, then that vessel is hit by the beam. Any vessel struck by a beam weapon takes 1D6 damage. Angular fire weapons are usually in turret mounts, and may cover a 180° arc of the ship (specify fire fields before play begins). Weapons may not fire out of the rear 45° of the ship if the ship was under thrust that turn.

Range detonation weapons require the firer to guess the range to the target in inches. This estimate is written down, then the range is measured, and an energy blast occurs in the stated position. These weapons have a 3" burst radius, doing 1D6 damage to any target caught in the burst. If the estimated range falls within the target ship model, 2D6 of damage is dealt, and the target's shields and armour do not count vs the damage. Range detonation weapons are spinal mounts, and may only be fired from the frontal 45° arc of the attacking vessel. Measure all ranges from the centre point of the firing ship.

Torpedoes are little ships that move 12" per turn. They may change course by up to 45° once every 6 inches of movement. Torpedoes may detonate at any point during their movement with a 3" burst circle. Any torpedo caught in a torpedo burst circle is destroyed. Ships caught in a torpedo burst circle take 1D6 damage. If the torpedo actually hits the enemy ship dead on, then all shields are halved. Torpedoes are fired from tubes that face either left, right or forward, having 45° fire arcs that must be pre defined before the game begins. Torpedoes are represented by matchsticks on the tabletop, and can be shot down by beams and missiles.

Defences

There are two types of defences available to ships: Armour and shields.

Armour absorbs damage. Each size point of a ship devoted to armour will absorb a total of 6 points of accumulated damage before the armour ablates away into space.

Shields are energy screens. Each screen covers one 90° arc of a ship's protractor. The position of shields must be plotted and changed during the movement orders section of a turn. Any energy beam hitting a shield, or any explosive force that must pass through the shield (measured by drawing a line

from the heart of the explosion to the nearest point of the ship) have their damage dice score halved (rounding up). Multiple shields can be layered over one another if desired, each one of these halving the remaining damage (eg 2 layers of shield halve the damage, then halve it again - but 1 single point of damage will always get through!)

Ship design

Ships are represented by models or silhouettes of c 3.5 inches in length and c. 1 inch wide. This gives a player 6 “size points” to play with. Smaller vessels about 1/2 this scale are counted as size 3 vessels. Dreadnoughts are 5 inches long, at least 2.5 inches wide, and have 12 size points.

- A size point will buy a weapon system: 1 angular fire weapon, 1 range detonation weapon or 1 torpedo tube with 3 torpedoes (may fire 1 torpedo per turn).

Torpedoes and range detonation weapons may all be grouped to fire out of a single fire arc. Angular fire weapons may be mounted with a maximum on 2 covering each basic arc (for these purposes, the basic arcs are the front arc of 270° to 90°, the left arc of 180° to 360°, the right arc of 1° to 180°, and the rear arc of 90° to 270°)

- A size point will buy 1 engine. Engines move ships 2” per turn for dreadnoughts, 4” per turn for normal ships, or 6” per turn for ‘tiddlers’.

- A size point will buy 1 shield generator. Shields lower damage caused by weapons by 1/2 (rounding up). Shields cover a 90° angle of the ship, and these angles may be changed each turn as part of movement orders.

- A size point will buy a point of armour. Armour absorbs 6 points of damage, and then ablates away.

- A size point may buy a power generator. Power generators generate 1D6 points of power per turn. Weapons, shields and engines require 1 power point in order to activate.

- A size point may buy a battery. A battery can hold a maximum of 9 points of power (and always starts the game fully charged). It can be used to store excess power from turn to turn.

Movement

All vessels have a basic 4” movement, regardless of what engines they have purchased. Additional movement is generated by the number of engines the vessel had bought.

Vessels may change heading at the beginning and at the mid point of their moves. Turns of up to 45° can be made - although an extra point of 'overpower' fed into the engines will turn the vessel 90° for one or both of these turns. The protractor is used to pivot the ship - simply stretch out the string to the new course heading, then swivel the ship about its centre of mass.

If no power is fed into engines, a vehicle will slowly coast to a stop, decelerating by 4" per turn.

All movement is pre recorded, then carried out simultaneously.

Turn sequence.

1) Power generation

Vessels must roll dice to see how much power they have available for this turn (1 dice per power generator).

2) Power allocation

Now allocate power. It costs one point to activate the ship's basic drives, plus 1 extra point per engine brought online. Weapons each cost 1 power point to operate. Shields cost 1 power point to activate. Excess power may not be stored from turn to turn unless the ship has bought 'batteries'.

3) Plot movement orders

All vessels and torpedoes pre-record their movement, and their angles of course change. All shield angles are also recorded.

4) Movement

All vessels and torpedoes are moved.

5) Plot fire orders

All vessels now record fire ranges and angles, then open fire. All fire is simultaneous. Torpedoes fired at this point are placed on the board beneath their ship; they will not move until next turn.

Damage.

Ships absorb three times their size points in damage before exploding. Every time 3 damage points are suffered (not counting damage done to a ship's armour), 1 of the damaged ship's systems is destroyed (owning player's choice).

Vessels can spend 3 points of power to heal 1 point of damage or bring one

destroyed system back online.

Overpower

A drive or weapon can have 2 points of power pumped into it rather than just 1 point. This allows weapons to gain an extra 1D3 of damage, and drives gain an extra 50% of thrust - but the overpowered system has a 1 in 6 chance of blowing up, causing the vessel 2 points of damage (ignoring armour).

Terrain

A fault with most space games is that they lack terrain on the board to pep up the action! So try throwing a few curves at the players from time to time!

For a bit of fun, try making your playing surface look more 'space like'. Black throwcloths spattered with blobs of paint (representing stars) can really dress up a game. The downside is that blue tack won't hold your protractors steady any more - so you'll have to be careful when moving ships around.

Asteroids

We recommend tossing several handy asteroids and planets onto the playing field. These block line of fire. Asteroids can be simple chunks of rock, or can be made from polystyrene. They should range from 1 inch to about 5 inches long. If you like, asteroids can be given a course and speed, allowing them to drift over the playing board. New asteroids can enter the board on a random table edge on a roll of (for example) 5 or 6 on 1D6. Any ship that collides with an asteroid is destroyed.

Hyperspace currents

Bands running across the table can also be designated as "hyperspace currents", which make ships drift 1" to 3" in the direction of the current for each 1/4 turn spent in the current zone (or each time they current is entered). Make a current 3 or 4 inches wide, and have it both enter and exit the tabletop. Real bastards can try to make whirlpools in space, which can be a hell of a lot of fun!

Space warps

Irregular areas of space from 6 to 24" wide can be designated as "space warps". Use coloured felt to indicate the presence of a warp. Space warps refract angle fire weapons and change the course of vessels moving through them. When a vessel or beam enters a warp, roll 1D10 for positives and 1D10 for negatives, and change the beam or vessel's path to the new heading. Torpedoes have a 1 in 6 chance of exploding when they encounter a warp.

Black holes

Black holes etc are cute battlefield additions. Any beam or vessel passing within 3" of a black hole changes its course 45% towards the black hole. Actually hitting a black hole dead-on destroys the ship.

Crystal asteroids

Shoot one with a beam, and it scatters 1D6 other beams out in random directions.

Jump points

Place several on the board. Fly a ship into one, and the ship can reappear at any other jump point on the board, moving at its previous heading and speed.

Ion storm fronts

A series of parallel lines will sweep the board from one table edge to another. Stretch strings across the table to represent the storm fronts. Put a knot or mark on the string at 2 foot intervals. Each 'knot' moves 1D6 inches per turn, heading for the opposite table edge. Ships and torpedoes cannot fire through storm "lines". Any weapon firing at a storm "line" will instead open a 4" gap in the line for 1 turn. Ships passing through storm lines take 1D6 damage unless they blow a hole through the stormfront and pass through.

“Schticks”

Vessels may each choose one schtick from the list below.

Psionics

If an enemy ship is within 24", then the angle of its weapons fire may be modified by + or - 5°. Missiles course changes may be modified by up to 10°. Range estimates may also be changed by + or - 2". These changes must be written down and then applied BEFORE the actual angles and ranges are measure on the board.

Point defence

Missiles coming within 6" of the ship are destroyed if a 4, 5 or 6 is rolled on 1D6. Roll only during the movement section of each turn.

Living vessel

The vessel automatically repairs a point of damage or one damaged system per turn if it rolls a "6" on 1D6.

Speedy

The ship has a basic movement of 8" rather than 4" (extra engines add additional speed as usual).

Manoeuvrable

The vessel may also change course by 45° each 1/3 move, rather than just at the beginning and middle of each move.

Cloak

The ship turns invisible as long as it keeps its speed to 4" per turn or lower, and as long as it has no shields operative and does not fire. The vessel must secretly record its actual position in relation to its base - it 's REAL base must abut one of the 4 sides of the base actually placed on the board.

Annihilator generators

This race has developed a steady system for power generation. All power generators create 2D3 power points per turn instead of 1D6.

Tough

The ship gains 4 points of 'free' armour.

Increased game difficulty

If players are getting too good at guessing fire angles and ranges, then try recording firing instructions BEFORE all ships are moved! Write down your fire orders at the same time movement is recorded.

Ship samples

Here are a few "size 6" ships that might amuse you.

Mk VII "Emasculator"

1 x power generator, 1 x armour, 1 x shield, 3 x torpedo launchers (9 torpedoes total): "*Schtick*" = *Cloak*

Scramoid death cruiser

1 x power generator, 2 x angular fire weapons, 1 x armour, 1 x shield, 1 x torpedo launcher. "*Schtick*" - *speedy ship*.

"Really neat bio-tech ship flown by sword babe in space bikini"

1 x Power generator, 1 x armour, 1 x shield, 2 x range detonation weapons, 1 x angular fire weapon. "*Schtick*" = *living vessel*.

Reconditioned WW2 battleship

3 x range detonation weapons, 2 x armour, 1 x power generator. "*Schtick*" = *tough*

EPC (Engine poisson de combat)

2 x angle fire weapons, 2 x torpedoes, 1 x power generator, 1 x engine. "*Schtick*" = *annihilation generators*.

Stiletto

3 x angular fire weapons, 1 x battery, 1 x power generator, 1 x engine.

"Schtick = speedy ship"