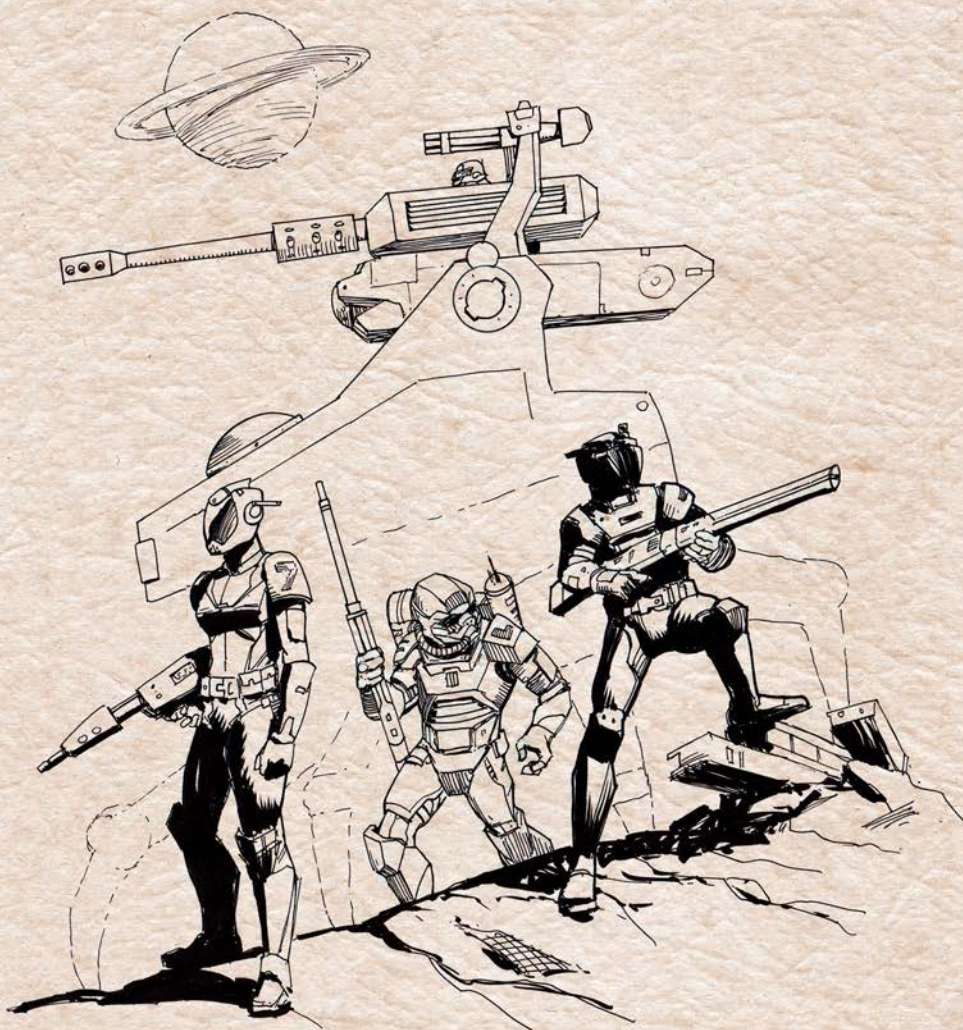


COLONIAL TROOPERS

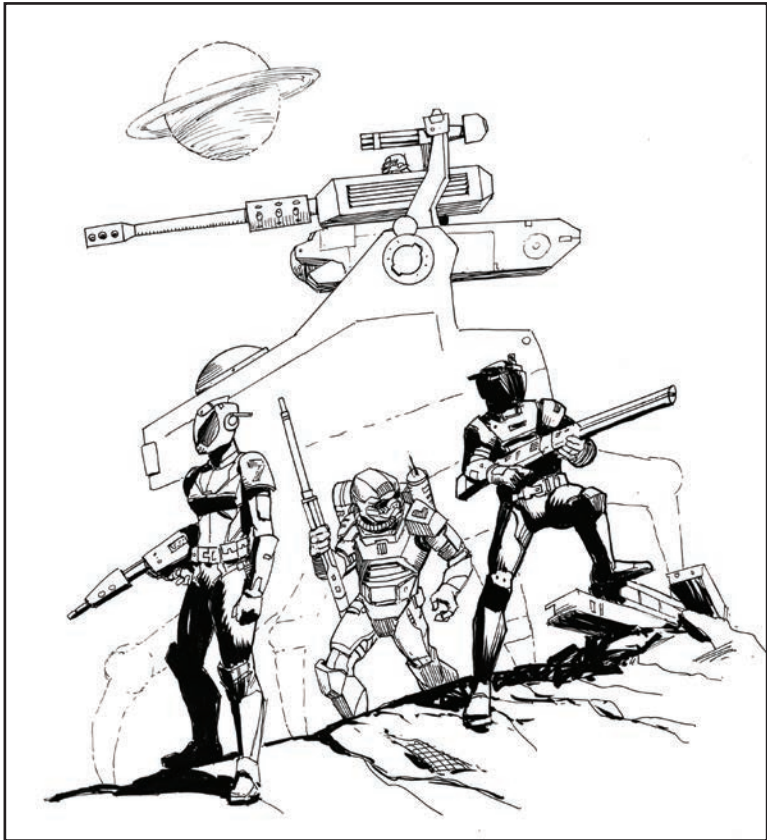
Original Edition Rules
for Hard Sci-Fi
Space Adventure Games



by Steve Perrin & Thomas Denmark

COLONIAL TROOPERS

Original Edition Rules
for Hard Sci-Fi Games



By Steve Perrin & Thomas Denmark

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Colonial Troopers
Early Edition

A Hard Science Fiction Roleplaying Game compatible with the Original Fantasy RPG and similar systems.



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Colonial Troopers

About this Game

What if the first RPG was inspired by hard Science Fiction as written by Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, and Frank Herbert instead of Tolkienesque fantasy?

Colonial Troopers is a science fiction RPG. If your tastes run towards battle hardened combat armor, some attention to real physics, and explorations of just what it is to be human, you've found the right book. As in the fiction of the above writers, the Player Characters (PCs) are confronted with an unforgiving universe full of wonders and deadly quirks of science ready to astound and enchant, and cull the unwary.

The rules are based, in their most basic form, on the original fantasy roleplaying game; all elements are intended to be mostly compatible with that system, its successive editions and versions, and with other old school retro-clones. The rules presented here are intended to be either a complete game, in and of itself, or to serve as a companion to other games using the same overall system. This book is a resource for Game Masters to pick and choose from, whichever suits your fancy. These other books are not necessary to enjoying this one, but elements of those books combined with this one is sure to result in a truly unique experience suited to each group's taste.

-Steve Perrin

Starship Soldiers?

This book could have been called Starship Soldiers, but Heinlein already used that name in the original 2-part serial publication that was reprinted as a novel called Starship Troopers.

Introduction to Common Space

War against the Super Intellect

In the 21st century man created computers that process and correlate data millions of times faster than any human. This led to a near catastrophe when a machine designed to seek out and mine uranium nearly destroyed the Earth by perfecting the production of uranium at the expense of humans, and monopolized the resources of the Earth, moon, and nearby asteroids (including several power-hungry nations) to accomplish its purpose.

A grueling battle for humanity's survival was fought against this artificial super-intelligence and its allies, and barely won by a ragtag band of hardened human soldiers led by a great military genius, Adam Benjoseph. A federation of surviving states formed a new constitution, rebuilt civilization from the ashes, and outlawed artificial super-intelligence.

The Biological Solution

In its place, mankind created methods of enhancing human thinking capacity

with pharmaceutical regimens and genetic surgery. This research bled over into initiatives to increase human Dexterity and Strength. Wartime technology spurts also led to humanity finally bringing themselves to the stars by use of the Stanhope-Obegwa drive, derived from a dead Oort Whale (see Creatures), originally meant to be the destruction system for Moon Killer missiles. Mankind left the war torn Solar System behind to expand cautiously into space.

They found an almost-barren universe. Many Earthlike planets were so much stone and empty seas. In others, life had taken something of a foothold, and some few were actually the lush jungles and wind-swept deserts depicted in the very popular revival of space fiction.

It seemed the answer to the Fermi Paradox would remain frustratingly elusive. For hundreds of years, Mankind explored, terraformed, and settled empty worlds, and wondered if there was another intelligence Out There. Then, on a densely forested planet called Moklin, named after its eccentric discoverer, mankind met a primitive, but sophisticated, alien intelligence. Delighted Earth corporations and countries leaped at the chance to assimilate these new aliens into the workforce who were so similar to primitive men and so eager to please their discoverers.

Enter the Xenophorms

The Xenophorms are a race of uncertain derivation and entirely voluntary shape choice. The Xenophorms had been restricted to their world of origin and took to the idea of space travel with keen enthusiasm. Initially, human explorers and exploiters fell all over themselves to make contact with these new playmates and uplift their technology to human level. Acting as assistants and grunt workers, and later as lab assistants and researchers, the Xenophorms spread throughout human space. They were always cheerful and helpful and quick to learn. Almost too late, humans found that the Xenophorms played rough, and they played for keeps.

The shape-shifting Xenophorms were actually bent on supplanting the human race. After an initial period of outward welcome and sharing, the Xenophorms revealed their ability to duplicate the shapes of humans and take control of the fleets of warships. Armies of infiltrators built war machines with stolen human technology. Humankind struggled to survive and undefendable colonies of humans fell in dozens as a peaceful humanity tried to re-create the war economies of previous eras.

For three decades, humankind was thwarted in every attempt to turn the tables. Out of desperation they revived its long-outlawed ancient technology dating back to an earlier epoch in their often bloody history. The Xenophorms based their infiltration methods on fooling human senses; they cannot fool the electronic machines. With the ability to detect Xenophorms as well as match their speed and strength from within mechanized battlesuits, humanity broke the spine of the Xenophorm conquest. In a few years, there were few Xenophorm military formations or major colonies left anywhere within a year's travel (approximately 1000 light years) of Earth.

The Tri-Stellar War

No sooner was the main Xenophorm menace demolished than its outlier units

began a campaign of creating fear of humanity among other races in the area. In no time, the Colonial Troopers found themselves in a life-and-death struggle with the spider-like, hive-oriented, race called the Rack'ni and with the tall, slim Sauroid humanoid Zassarians, often called Skinnies, or Scalies. That war lasted for another Terran decade and caused devastation on the home worlds and colonies of every combatant.

Now, hostilities are officially over. Brave agents of all the belligerent races managed to prove to the other races the duplicity of the Xenophorms and turned the great stellar war into a war of extinction against the Xenophorms. The resulting victory was by no means complete, but all detectable Xenophorm influences were eradicated. The Three-Way-Interstellar-War ended in an Armistice that developed into a Peace.

A Peace of Broken Pieces

The Orion Arm of the galaxy now resembles the post 2nd Civil War America, or perhaps what Europe would have looked like after WWII if there had not been a Marshall Plan. Large stretches of lawlessness encircle pockets of civilization. Here and there secret conspiracies of Xenophorms continue to dream of conquest behind their facades of recovering human or other race colonies.

Because the wars are over, there is suddenly a surplus of trained military people who need to find a new place for themselves, and military equipment that is surplus and easily available for use in those large stretches of lawlessness.

Onto this stage step the Player Characters (PCs) to find what they can and help rebuild Common Space into a unified peaceful coalition.

Starting the Game

The first step in playing the game is to create a character. This is a simple matter of rolling some dice to determine your character's strength and other basic attributes, picking a character class, using your game money to buy some equipment, and then playing.

If you're the Game Master (GM), you've got a bit more preparation to do—that's covered later in a section especially for the Game Master.

Rule Number One

The most important rule is that the Game Master always has the right to modify the rules. In fact, it's encouraged. There are gaps in the rules—holes which we did not fill on purpose because much of the fun of "old school" gaming is being able to make rules up as you need them.

This can be as simple as the GM saying "um, grab some dice, roll them, and tell me the number" or more complex home-brew charts for the smallest of details. Along the way we'll be making suggestions, explanations, and giving ideas; feel free to use them or discard them as you like.

This is your game, after all.

The Dice

Colonial Troopers uses several different kinds of dice, and we abbreviate them according to how many sides they have. So, the four-sided die is called a d4, and

if we're telling you to roll 3 of them, we say to roll 3d4. The six-sided die is a d6, the eight-sided die is a d8, the ten-sided die is a d10, the twelve-sided die is a d12, and the twenty-sided die is a d20. There is no die with 100 sides—what you do to roll a d100 is to roll two ten-sided dice, treating the first roll as the “tens” and the second roll as the “ones.” So, if you were to roll a 7 and then a 3, that would mean a 73. A roll of 0 and 0 means a result of “100.”v

Attribute Scores

The attribute scores are numbers which represent the strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution, and charisma of the character.

The standard way to create attribute scores is to roll 3d6 in the order listed above. Once those rolls have been made, it is often obvious which type of character best fits the stats, but a player always has the option to play any character class desired. This basic method urges the player to allow the dice to choose what kind of character is played.

For those players who have no faith at all in their dice luck, they may use one of the following pre-rolled sets, assigning the numbers to whichever attribute seems proper for the type of character they want to play:

Hero: 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16

The Hero has very good stats in two attributes, average to high average in three, and one that is not quite up to the average, portraying the “fatal flaw” that accompanies the story of every hero.

Generalist: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

The Generalist has a couple of slightly above average abilities, but is at least average in everything. In theory he can be competent as any sort of character.

Specialist: 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18

The Specialist is the best there is at what he does, hence the 18 Attribute in something. He also has Heroic level Attributes in two Attributes, high average in a fourth, but two of his Attributes range from low average to poor. This portrays his total concentration on his specialty to the detriment of a fully rounded skill set.

The Attributes

Strength

A high strength gives a character bonuses when attacking with a melee weapon, and lets him carry more weight. Strength is the prime attribute for Mercenaries.

- Mercenaries use their Strength Bonus to gain a percent bonus on earned Experience Points (XP).
- Combatants use their Strength Bonus to modify their Basic Hit Bonus (BHB) number with hand-held (melee) weapons.
- Combatants use their Strength Bonus to modify their “damage” result with hand-held (melee) weapons.

Intelligence

Intelligence represents IQ, reasoning, memory, and the ability to solve puzzles or understand difficult concepts. Intelligence is the prime attribute for Agent characters.

- ▶ Use the character's Intelligence Bonus to learn additional languages. You gain one extra language for every point above 10.
- ▶ Agents use their Intelligence Bonus to gain a percent bonus on Experience Points (XP) earned.
- ▶ Find the Weakness: Characters use their Intelligence Bonus to gain a bonus on weapon effectiveness against armored targets (i.e. target suffers a loss on his Armor Class (AC) against the character's attack).

Wisdom

Wisdom determines a character's insight, perception, and good judgment. Wisdom is the prime attribute for Hunter characters.

- ▶ Any character uses their Wisdom Bonus to gain a percent bonus on XP earned.
- ▶ Hunters use their Wisdom Bonus to gain an additional percent bonus on XP earned.
- ▶ Characters use their Wisdom Bonus to gain a bonus on weapon effectiveness against hiding targets (i.e. target suffers a loss on his concealment bonus vs Character's ranged attack).

Dexterity

Dexterity is a combination of coordination and quickness. A high dexterity score gives your character bonuses when attacking with a ranged weapon. It is the Prime requisite for Pilot characters.

- ▶ Use the Dexterity Bonus to modify the character's BHB number with ranged weapons.
- ▶ Pilots use their Dexterity Bonus to gain a percent bonus on XP earned.
- ▶ Characters use their Dexterity Bonus to modify AC. This is limited by armor bulk (especially for Troopers) and Size considerations for races like the Clodhoppers.

Constitution

Constitution is the health and endurance of the character. A high constitution gives a character extra hit points and is the prime requisite for Trooper characters.

- ▶ The Constitution Bonus adds hit points on each hit die.
- ▶ Troopers use their Constitution Bonus to gain a percent bonus on XP earned
- ▶ The Game Master may call for Constitution rolls of a ST + Constitution Bonus when the character is facing possible suffocation or exhaustion.

Charisma

A highly charismatic character has a better chance to talk his way out of trouble, and can lead more special followers than characters with a low charisma.

Charisma is the prime requisite for Diplomat characters

- ▶ Diplomats use their Charisma Bonus to gain a percent bonus on Experience Points (XP) earned.

- Use the character's Charisma to ascertain the number of loyal NPC hirelings available and to modify the loyalty of NPC hirelings.

Universal Attribute Bonus

Each attribute has the potential to modify what the character can do. Table 1, below, Universal Attribute Bonus (or just "Bonus") gives some numbers to consider:

Table 1: Universal Attribute Bonus

Attribute Roll	Description	Bonus
3	Pathetic	-3 (or -15%)
4-5	Poor	-2 (or -10%)
6-8	Below Average	-1 (-05%)
9-12	Average	-
13-15	Above Average	+1 (or +5%)
16-17	Excellent	+2 (or +10%)
18	Superior	+3 (or +15%)

This rules set encourages the use of the above table for all of the attributes.

Experience Bonus

Each character gets a bonus percentage to "experience points," that usually increases how much experience is gained in an adventure.

- All characters get to add their percentage Wisdom Bonus to their XP Bonus.
- All characters get to add their Prime Attribute Bonus based on their class.

These percentages are added together to get the total experience bonus for the character. The maximum attainable XP Bonus is 20%. In theory characters can get up to 30%, but in reality these bonuses start to cancel each other out.

Starting Credits

Roll 3d6 and multiply by 1000. This represents the number of Credits (Cr) that your character gets to have at the start of the campaign. Use this to buy equipment. Troopers already have their basic Trooper Suit. The Game Master may specify a basic load of equipment the character has without purchase. This money helps the character to augment that equipment. See the Equipment Chapter.

The Credit is a general electronic coinage used by the races of Common Space. Internally, each race has its own currency, but the Credit is fast supplanting that currency in all major markets. In fact, the Credit became fully legitimate when the Clodhoppers adopted it – apparently it was little different from their own system. The Bugs and the Skinnies have no individual funds systems, just systems that deal with interchanges between Hive and Hive, or Nest and Nest.

Character Classes

There are six character classes in this game: Agent, Diplomat, Hunter, Mercenary, Pilot, and Trooper.

Reading Character Class Tables

Level: Refers to the levels of experience of the character.

XP: This is the number of Experience Points (XP) needed to advance to this level.

BHB: This is the “Base Hit Bonus” added to the attack roll. (See Combat)

HD: This is the number of Hit Dice at that level. Characters roll their new HD each time they advance a level to obtain an addition to their number of hit points.

ST: This is the Skill Throw number for the character (see Skill Throw below). It is used to determine the success of the use of a skill appropriate to the character class. Some classes have additions or even subtractions to these numbers in particular cases. These modifiers are described in the individual Class Descriptions, below.

In some cases, particularly Agents and Hunters, the addition of the class bonus to the Skill Throw including appropriate modifier can make the ST a negative number. This may be offset by difficulty modifiers specified by the GM, or not. In any case, a natural roll of 1 on the D20 is a failure, and a natural roll of a 20 on the D20 is a success.

Skill Throw is also used when trying to avoid something terrible. This number is modified by the appropriate Attribute modifier depending on the type of terrible event.



Table 2: Attribute Modifiers versus Terrible Events

Strength	Crushing Events, Disarm Events, Knockback Events
Intelligence	Memory Events, Puzzle Events,
Wisdom	Perception Events, Deception Events, Mental Attack
Constitution	Death, Deprivation, Disease, Endurance, Poison,
Dexterity	Evasion Events, Balance & Coordination Events, Speed Events
Charisma	Ego Events, Emotion Events, Fast Talk Events

Skill Throw

While Colonial Troopers does not utilize specific skills, promoting the aesthetic that player action trumps random rolls, there may be times when the Game Master prefers some sort of die check be made to determine whether or not a character is successful attempting a particular action. In these cases, the Game Master determines which of the character's abilities is most relevant to the task being attempted. If two or more are relevant, the highest ability may be used at the Game Master's discretion.

For instance, the player wants to see if his character can leap over a pit. The Game Master determines Strength is the relevant ability. Or, the player may attempt to disable a doomsday device with a ticking clock. The Game Master then determines the player may utilize either Dexterity or Intelligence to make the attempt.

It should be stressed that this system is only intended to resolve the most unlikely resolutions; Game Masters are encouraged to allow automatic success when reasonable or when the player adequately describes the steps he or she takes to accomplish the desired objective.

At no time should a player be called on for a Skill Throw unless the GM is ready for the character to either succeed or fail. And ready for failure should not be limited to "you're dead."

The player rolls a d20, using the attribute modifier to increase (or in some cases decrease) the d20 roll. The Game Master may also add or subtract situational modifiers. If the final result is equal to or higher than the character's Skill Throw, which is the same as his Saving Throw, the skill succeeds.

Example: Clint says that his Hunter character, Dirk Largo, is going to climb the wall of the colonial HQ to get to the Commander's office and steal his keys to the weapon vaults. The GM is ready to deal with this situation whether or not Dirk succeeds, so he calls for a Climbing Skill roll, based on Dexterity. Dirk is 4th level, has average Dexterity and no Hunter Skill in Climbing (see Hunter writeup). His Skill Throw is 11. Since there is a time factor because the regular city patrol is due in ten minutes, the GM adds 4 to the Skill Throw, meaning that Clint has to roll 15 or more to get up to the office in time.

Clint rolls "Aha! Fifteen!"

The GM says "You are just slipping through the open window to the Commander's office as the patrol passes beneath you. They look up, but do not see you."

"Got it," says Clint.

The GM smiles and adds "Is there something you are looking for, Mr. Largo?" says the Commander, who is working late at his desk.

There are occasions when one ST may be put against another character's ST. In this case, the deciding factor is the success level of the throw. The success level is how well the throw has succeeded. For instance, in the example above, Drago had a success level of 1, since he just made the roll. If the GM was using random rolls to determine if the commander was in, he would make a ST based on the Commander's Wisdom. The Commander's roll is 17, and the character is a 5th level Mercenary, so he made his roll by more than Clint did, and the Commander is waiting for Our Hero. If the Commander's roll had a result of 10 or less, he would not be in his office.



Agent

Agents are trained representatives of corporations, governments, or ethnic groups. Player character Agents are assumed to be free lancers performing agent functions on a contract basis or as members of a group out for their mutual advancement. Or are they?

While a large part of the Agent's training is to blend in and keep alive in hostile territory, sometimes agents cannot blend in with alien creatures, so they are also trained in surveillance, stealth, and survival. Their Skill Throws are +2 for these skills, in addition to their Skill Throw bonus (see Table 3 below).

An agent must have her wits about her at all times, always a step ahead of their enemies. Those with 13 or higher in Intelligence receive a bonus to all experience earned.

Agents may use any weapon, though they favor light or easily concealed ones, and may utilize only light armors, such as concealed vests. If they use heavier weapons, or armor, they have a penalty of -2 with any combat skills. This penalty is not stackable. It remains the same whether the character is using heavy weapons, heavy armor, or both.

Table 3: Agent Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d6)	BHB	ST	Skill Bonus
1	Pawn	0	1	+1	16	
2		1,500	2	+1	15	+1
3	Knight	3,000	3	+2	14	+2
4		6,000	4	+2	13	+3
5	Bishop	12,000	5	+3	12	+3
6		25,000	6	+4	11	+4
7	Rook	50,000	7	+5	10	+4
8		100,000	8	+5	9	+5
9	Queen	200,000	9	+6	8	+5
10	King	400,000	10	+6	7	+6

Agent special abilities:

Back stabbing: An Agent who successfully sneaks up on, surprises, or distracts an enemy receives a bonus of +4 to-hit, and does double the normal melee or ranged weapon damage. This bonus to damage increases to x3 at 5th level.

Skill: Agents have a knack for achieving unlikely results when it comes to things like picking pockets, picking locks, sneaking past or distracting guards, disarming small or intricate traps, bluffing at gambling, and so on. They have a bonus to their normal ST to achieve favorable results as indicated in the Agent Skill Bonus column, these are only applied at the Game Master's discretion.

Diplomat

Diplomats are characters whose forte is interaction with other, possibly hostile, sapients. They are often the leaders of exploration groups and where they are not they serve as the “face” of the group and are trusted with immediate decisions dealing with others.

The Primary Attribute for Diplomats is Charisma. Characters with this class often have high Wisdom’s as well, as the input from their personal observations can be critical to the safety of the group.

Diplomat Special Abilities

Because Diplomats are frequently called on to use their talents in tense situations they have no weapon or armor restrictions.

Diplomats can persuade using their ST modified by their Charisma Bonus to gain the assistance of a basically neutral crowd that is intelligent and understands the Diplomat. The ST the Diplomat has to make is modified based on the general likelihood of cooperation by the crowd being addressed as determined by the Game Master.

Diplomats have the ability to talk a hostile group into negotiation. The hostile group must understand the Diplomat and not have obvious overwhelming force. The Diplomat then rolls based on her ST plus Charisma Bonus vs the leader(s) of the opposing force Charisma Bonus +ST (or some higher or lower value depending on the GM’s idea of the degree of hostility). Compare how well each side made the negotiation roll on Table 5.

Diplomats get XP Bonus for Charisma.

Table 4: Diplomat Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d6)	BHB	ST
1	Intern	0	1	+0	16
2		1,000	2	+1	15
3	Facilitator	2,000	3	+1	14
4		5,000	4	+2	13
5	Interceder	8,000	5	+2	12
6		14,000	6	+3	11
7	Negotiator	21,000	7	+3	10
8		45,000	8	+4	9
9	Consul	135,000	9	+4	8
10	Ambassador	250,000	10	+5	7

Table 5: Negotiation result

Negotiation Result	Effect on Negotiation
+5 or better	Diplomat Group Aided by Opposing Force
+3 to +4	Diplomat Group Left in Peace
+1 to +2	Diplomat Group Left in Peace with small concession to Opposing Force
0	Negotiations continue
-1 to -2	Diplomat Group Left in Peace by giving a valuable hostage
-3 to -4	Opposing Force declares negotiation closed and forms for an attack
-5 or worse	Opposing Force attacks immediately by surprise

Hunter

It is remarkably easy for resourceful criminals to get off planet if the surroundings prove too hot for them. Once they are in the vastness of Common Space, planet-bound authorities do not have the resources to seek them out and return them for justice. As a result bounty hunters have a thriving trade.

Bounty Hunters are explorers and expeditors. These adventurers are the ultimate survivalists and have great skill at both actual jungles and the jungles of the streets of the ravaged cities of Common Space.

Fugitives with the resources to get off world often have other means as well in the form of mercenaries and other guards. Lost resources may be under the control of inimical forces. Hunters often team up with other adventurers and practice their profession as an additional source of income for the group as a whole.

Hunters have a set of skills appropriate to their experience. They range from trailing targets, researching historical events, bluffing adversaries, area knowledge of various cities, nations, groups of planets, space mythology, etc. As a starting character, the Hunter has these skills at their ST. As he gains experience, he adds to particular skills that give him better chances to accomplish them. The Skill Table shows how many skills of this sort he has at each level and what his add for that skill is.

A Hunter may add specialized weapon Skill to the list. It advances his ability with that particular weapon. Hand-to-hand combat is also a possibility, as is Healing.

Essentially, anything the Player and Game Master agree on as a Skill may be added to the list. No Skill may be increased in this manner more than +5.

Hunter Class Abilities

- ▶ Hunters are restricted to concealable weapons and armor. They can use heavier weapons and battle armor, but are at -2 with all combat skills while using unfamiliar weapons and armor.
- ▶ Hunters get +2 on skill throws vs. Wisdom Events.
- ▶ At tenth level, a Hunter character who chooses to build a school teaching

material they have dealt with in their adventures may attract a body of loyal scholars who promote his institution.

- **XP Bonus for Wisdom:** This class bonus is in addition to the XP Bonus all characters get by having a high wisdom attribute.

Table 6: Hunter Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d8)	Skill Advancement					BHB	ST
				+1	+2	+3	+4	+5		
1	Seeker	0	1						+1	14
2		1,200	2	1					+1	13
3	Prowler	2,400	3	2					+1	12
4		4,800	4	2	1				+2	11
5	Ranger	9,600	5	2	2	1			+2	10
6		20,000	6	2	2	1	1		+3	9
7	Scout	40,000	7	2	2	2	1	1	+4	8
8		80,000	8	2	2	2	2	2	+5	7
9	Explorer	160,000	9	3	3	3	2	2	+6	6
10	Finder	320,000	10	3	3	3	3	3	+7	5

Mercenary

This class is based on Strength, as among their normal challenges is having the ability to carry one another off the field. These are soldiers who fought without the powered armor of the Colonial Trooper and often claim a disdain for those who have to fight “in a tin can.” Sufficiently strong Mercenaries can carry one (but just one) of the major weapons of the Colonial Troopers. They also have armor which, while not as effective as the Trooper’s, still helps them survive intense combat.

Many Mercenaries boast of killing Colonial Troopers. In general, they haven’t. Look for the Mercenaries who take very good care of their weapons and train and practice diligently without boasting of Colonial Trooper “kills” to find the effective mercenaries.

Mercenary Special Abilities

Combat Specialty: Mercenaries receive a +1 bonus to-hit and to damage with a particular weapon (chosen upon creating the character). They may shift this specialization to a different weapon each time they gain a new level.

Unstoppable: A Mercenary, upon killing an enemy, receives an immediate free attack with the same probability against any other enemy within reach.

Multiple Attacks: A Mercenary of 6th level and above gets a second attack against any foe at a reduced chance. These two specials can be combined, allowing a 6th level Mercenary, for example, to attack one foe and kill him, attack another foe with the same probability, and then attack that foe again (or another

one) at -5 to his probability.

Mercenaries gain an Attribute Bonus based on Strength bonus to their earned Experience points.

Table 7: Mercenary Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d12)	BHB	ST
1	Recruit	0	1	+1	15
2		2,000	2	+2	14
3	Rifleman	4,000	3	+3	13
4		8,000	4	+4	12
5	Squad Leader	16,000	5	+5	11
6		32,000	6	+6,+1	10
7	Platoon Leader	64,000	7	+7,+2	9
8		128,000	8	+8,+3	8
9	Company Leader	256,000	9	+9,+4	7
10	Force Leader	520,000	10	+10,+5	6

Pilot

There are two kinds of pilot and those of one discipline cannot work with the harness and accoutrements of the other. Each type of pilot is heavily modified with either cybernetic implants or psycho-chemicals and surgery.

The **Free Pilots** start out as anything but free. Their cybernetic attachments that allow them to interface with Hole Space are incredibly expensive and they owe their careers and even lives to the corporate or national entities that provided the equipment. While Free Pilots often work with adventuring parties, it is with the knowledge that they may be recalled by the owners of their hardware at any moment. Buying out of this restriction is generally the first priority of Free Pilots who want to be really free, but it takes a big bite out of whatever booty they find in their adventures.

The **True Pilots** eschew any electronic bolstering but use Oort Gas to allow them the pathfinding ability to navigate the waves and depths of Hole Space. The first of the Hole Space pilots were True Pilots, and many claim their ability to weave through Hole Space is far superior to that of the so-called Free Pilots. Unfortunately, they have no way to detect or deflect Xenophormic influence.

Pilots depend on Dexterity. Pilots trained in space ship control can, as a byproduct, control any other form of vehicle in Common Space. Their components and natural Dexterity also makes them excellent ranged combatants, so they are highly valued on any adventuring crew.

Pilots Special Abilities

- XP Bonus for Dexterity.
- +2 Bonus to Saving Throws having to do with Dexterity

- +2 to BHB for ranged attacks, in addition to the usual addition for high Dexterity

Guidance: Pilots have an unerring sense of direction. This seems to be tied to the dark energy between the stars themselves. Even on planets and stations, the Pilot can find the way to a known location.

Cat Feet: Pilots of any race always land on their feet and take damage from a fall as if falling in half the actual gravity field.

Repair: Pilots are often the technology experts on a team. They have an intimate connection with almost any equipment and can be called on to repair gear and larger devices in the field. Pilots are +4 on all Skill Throws (ST) to repair gear and understand alien technology. They also have an almost instinctive ability to detect mechanical traps at the same modifier.

Free Pilots cannot be Psychic. The cybernetic connections apparently block whatever cellular specifications that allow Psychic power.

Table 8: Pilot Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d10)	BHB	ST
1	Wheelman	0	1	+0	13
2		1,400	2	+1	12
3	Airman	2,800	3	+2	11
4		5,600	4	+3	10
5	Spaceman	11,000	5	+4	9
6		22,000	6	+5	8
7	Hyperman	44,000	7	+6	7
8		88,000	8	+7	6
9	Star Pilot	176,000	9	+8	5
10	Star Captain	350,000	10	+9	4



Trooper

Only the hardiest of any race can be properly attuned to the battlesuit, so that it becomes a second skin. Therefore the Prime Requisite for this Class is Constitution.

Imagine a super soldier that can outrun any animal. who can carry hundreds of pounds with ease. See in the dark. Can go weeks at a time without food, water, or sleep. Can communicate telepathically with his squad. Can heal rapidly, even regrow limbs. And can be completely controlled mind and body by military technicians from thousands of miles away.

These are the colonial troopers that mankind was forced to create after it made first contact that resulted in a devastating war where mankind was nearly eliminated. A trooper is cybernetically linked to its suit at inception and cannot be separated from the suit for any length of time without suffering greatly.

With the end of official hostilities, thousands of Troopers were made redundant. Many disappeared entirely and are thought to be resting in cryogenic capsules maintained by the various governments to be broken out again in case of a resumption of hostilities or the appearance of a new enemy.

Former Troopers without that opportunity find themselves in need of employment. Fortunately, there are many civilian and quasi-civilian groups who can use someone with access to Trooper armor. While the armor was first developed by humans for the Tri-Stellar War, the exigencies of the final war with the Xenophorms made sharing the technology necessary. Companies devoted to maintaining the suits were created by the maintenance techs given that duty during the war. It is possible for a Trooper with the basic armor suit he is allowed to leave service with to continue his career as a freelance muscle for adventuring companies, bodyguard for bigwigs who want the prestige of a Trooper guarding them, etc.

Such troopers start with basic suits (all advanced systems are stripped from the suits before they are released) and can, as they advance in level, gain access to enhancement mods that can bring them up to the power they had as war Troopers, and even beyond as researchers develop better-than-government-issue adjuncts to the power suits.

The basic suit gives its wearer a wide range radio, Wide Spectrum Goggles, +4" ground movement, +5" leaping ability, and a Damage Resistance of 4 in addition to its AC of 8.

The wearer can operate any weapon normally. If the weapon is a module for the suit, there is no Endurance penalty.

Because of the bulk of the suit, anyone using a ranged weapon against a Trooper adds +1 to her chance of hitting.

Table 9: Colonial Trooper Advancement

Level	Title	XP	HD (d8)	BHB	ST	Modules	Call Back
1	Squaddie	0	1	1	12	2/	
2	-	2,500	2	1	11	3/1	5%
3	Corporal	5,000	3	2	10	4/2	10%
4	-	10,000	4	2	9	5/3/1	15%
5	Sergeant	20,000	5	3	8	5/3/2	20%
6	-	40,000	6	4	7	5/3/3/1	25%
7	Master Sergeant	100,000	7	5	6	5/4/3/2	35%
8	-	250,000	8	6	5	5/4/4/3/1	35%
9	Lieutenant	500,000	9	7	4	5/4/4/3/2	35%
10	Captain	1,000,000	10	8	3	5/5/4/3/3	35%

Trooper Suits

A Trooper can carry any weapon and use it at any time. However, some of the weapons eventually become accessible as a suit module, which means that they can be used with the Aiming Reticule and any piece of equipment purchased as a suit module has no Encumbrance penalty for the wearer.

Suit Modules

The Trooper can purchase any module shown in the equipment chapter at any time. However, he can only use them when he has gained enough Experience to justify opening up the appropriate slots in his basic suit.

Table 10: Trooper Module Advancement

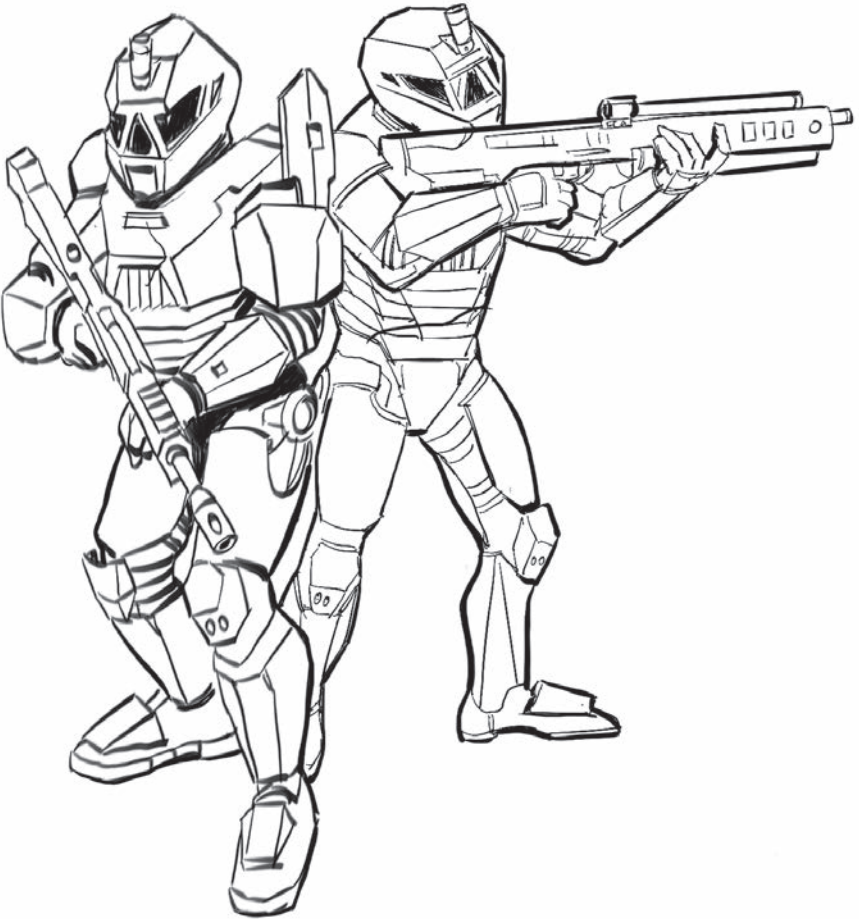
Trooper Level	Module Level				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	-	-	-	-
2	3	1	-	-	-
3	4	2	-	-	-
4	5	3	1	-	-
5	5	3	2	-	-
6	5	3	3	1	-
7	5	4	3	2	-
8	5	4	4	3	1
9	5	4	4	3	2
10	5	5	4	3	3

Call Back

Every time a Colonial Trooper advances in level, there is a chance he is called back into Trooper Service. This is modified by adding or subtracting

the Trooper's Charisma Bonus, depending on the GM's wish to fit this call into his plot line.

Depending on where the Trooper is when he gets the Call, there may or may not be someone he or his group can bribe with either money or offering to do a favor for, in order to keep from responding. This is meant to be an interesting plot complication for the campaign, not a character "killer."



Multiple Classes

Switching classes is actually very easy in the hi-tech worlds of Common Space. When a character is about to go up in class, the player can instead say that the character is switching class. In Common Space terms, it means the character takes a cybernetic chip that gives him the basic skills of the new class. In some cases, such as taking a rank of Colonial Trooper, the character must be in a colony or aboard a space ship with the technical capability of providing the starting technology for the class. If the character is somewhere he has no access to the implant, he cannot change, though he can increase in his current class.

Hit dice, skill ability, ST, BHB are increased per the first rank of the new class. If something like the character's former ST or BHB is better than the first rank of the new class, the old first rank numbers apply. In effect the character is a composite of the two classes. New Hit Dice, on the other hand, are strictly those of the new class.

When the character reaches the XP point in the new class to increase to 2nd level in that class, he can do that, or go back to the original class to become second rank. The character can even become a 1st rank character of yet another class. Once a character has 1st rank in a class, he can advance in that class normally without a technology boost, though of course a Colonial Trooper needs a suit update to gain use of new slots.

A character does not advance in classes simultaneously. Each advance must lead to one class's advancement path. A Pilot 3/Mercenary 5/Hunter 2, for instance, who decides to go for another rank of Hunter must put all XP gained towards becoming a Hunter 3. A Psychic character, however, continues to advance in accordance with her highest class level. The above character, for instance, would be a 4th level Psychic, based on the Mercenary Rank 5, and when she attained her next level of Hunter she would still be a 4th level Psychic because her Mercenary rank is highest.

This can be very useful for a group, especially if everyone has at least a level in Colonial Trooper. It also makes for broad based characters, though not very powerful ones.

Further Progression

There is nothing stopping characters from progressing beyond 10th level in one or more classes (See Multiple Classes above). Further levels cost the same as the progression from 9th to 10th level. Progression in special abilities like Trooper modules or Hunter Skills or BHB or ST can be derived from the progress between 1st and 10th.

Races

There are four naturally evolved races who dominate the 2000 light year diameter rough sphere that encompasses Common Space, and they are joined by one created race, and one inadvertently developed. There are several other intelligent races in Common Space, but they are mostly primitive and limited to one world.

There is a very informal Alliance of the sapient races that includes all those described in this chapter. There is no overreaching governmental body controlling the Alliance, everything is on a diplomatic basis.

Rackni (K'tk^nit'm~on)

Most humans see Rackni aka Bugs as giant spiders because of their many long legs that are often in a blur of motion even when the individual is remaining stationary. Skinnies have a similar derogatory term for their one time frenemies. The Bugs, on the other hand, know that they earned a lot of respect during the Space Wars, and they accept the derogatory designations of their former enemies proudly.

Bugs are masters of breeding functions for themselves, and they have specialists of types that no non-Bug has ever heard of. It is known that Bugs have a general hive setup with a Brain that manages the hive, a Queen whose function is to produce more and more hive members, male Drones to service the Queen and otherwise be useless adornments, and the neuter female workers who do all the work. When at war, Bug breeder brains induce the Queen to produce soldiers, who are larger and stronger than the usual workers.

As hinted above, the Bug Brain caste has many functions. What was not known until after the Human-Bug-Skinny war is that some Brains are bred to be isolated and free-ranging, acting as ambassadors at large for the hives. Most Brain Bugs are almost as helpless as a Queen, but the Free Roving Brains actually look more like a Soldier Bug than anything else, but with a larger brain case. To keep up the confusion, a Roving Brain often has several Soldiers acting as his aides and general muscle. These Bugs have a roving commission to learn as much about the universe as they can and as such there have been cases in the last few years of Bug Brains joining adventuring parties composed of several different races.

Bugs are never found as Mercenaries. Bugs with those abilities stay with the Hives. Free Roving Brain Bugs can become Colonial Troopers, Agents, Diplomats, Hunters, or Pilots. Most Brain Bug Pilots are Free Pilots.

Special Abilities:

- ▶ All Free Roving Brain Bugs can walk over walls and ceilings unless the surfaces are totally slick.
- ▶ Brain Bugs can also see into the Ultraviolet Spectrum and have wrap around vision from their many eyes that helps keep them safe from ambushes.
- ▶ Brain Bugs are a bit delicate and subtract 2 from their Constitution.
- ▶ Brain Bugs are bred for intelligence. Add 2 to their Intelligence
- ▶ Brain Bugs refer to themselves as male, but could be neuter female like a worker.

- Other Bug castes subtract 4 from Intelligence

TOP SECRET; FOR BUG EYES ONLY: Roving Brain Bugs are actually Queens looking for new places to start a Hive. Once they have a safe place guarded by accompanying Soldier Bugs, the Queen immediately starts pushing out pre-fertilized eggs. The first eggs are a new Roving Brain Bug and three or four standard-issue Brain Bugs to run the Hive. The rest of the eggs are a few drones and a small worker force to tend to the Queen. There is a direct personality and memory transfer from Queen to the new Brain Bugs.

Humans

Humans developed on the planet Terra, also called Earth in ancient times. Terra is still the most populated human world, though some early colonies that survived the Tri-Stellar War are starting to match it in size and surpass it in economic power and political influence. Most human worlds are part of the United Planets, a name derived from an entertainment show of the 20th century. Worlds within the organization have a certain amount of autonomy but they league together for mutual defense and diplomacy. Representatives to the United Congress represent either planets or multi-planet corporations.

The unique aspect of human governance of this time is the vote is tied to service. To be a voting citizen and run for and hold office, one must have completed service either in the military or a similar government service involving hazards and/or the possibility of having to make life or death decisions. Postmasters, civil service clerks, and food inspectors do not get citizenship credit for their service, and these are jobs that many veterans who have completed service, or been invalidated out, obtain to support themselves.

People in government service are not citizens, only those who have finished their service can vote or hold office. Corporate entities have to be represented by veterans as much as any planet. No one can be a delegate or a registered lobbyist without having served. Acting as an unregistered lobbyist is a hanging offence, as are many other infractions that other eras would not have called capital crimes.

Many humans avoid service and forego their right to vote. There are no blocks to people succeeding in business or the arts or other endeavors.

At this point in time, The United Planets only include human-colonized worlds, including some predominantly Synthetic and Zealot. There are initiatives to bring the Bugs, the Skinnies, and the Clodhoppers into the organization, but there is considerable pushback both from the other races who fear being subordinated to Humans and from internal human organizations that do not want aliens in their governing body. Many member worlds do include large minority populations of other aliens.

Lur (Clodhoppers)

Clodhoppers are commonly called after the first of their number to make contact with humans, a child of the Lur that had not yet developed communication skills nor the manipulative arms that come when the creature is fully adult and sentient. As a child, a Clodhopper is an eight-legged vaguely crocodilian creature with a long body about the size of a Corgie. The face is something like that of a hippopotamus but with the sparkle of a bright German Shepherd in its eyes even as a child.

The original Clodhopper wandered away from its people at a very young age and was rescued from a local predator by a human explorer, who took it home as a pet. During its time with its human family, Clodhopper grew to its normal adult size and even larger than normal, approximating a 10 ton tractor and trailer, due to a diet of too much metal. Adult Clodhoppers try to keep their weight to about that of an African elephant, about 5 tons. Due to the dense flesh of their bodies, they actually have less volume, though they take up the standing area of about 10 humans. An adult Lur is centauroid, and very flexible. Their tails are bulky and used mostly for balance, though attackers from the rear soon learn it can be whipped very hard at a dorsal target.

Shortly after the end of the Xenophorm War, the mistake was rectified and the original Clodhopper still serves as Ambassador to Humanity for his people. The Clodhopper race is actually and officially called The Lur, but hardly anyone uses that name. The Lur call themselves Clodhoppers in common Space. They figure that calling themselves that name is fair warning to everyone else that Dexterity is not their main attribute.

The Lur have had formal relations with the other three races only in the last few years. They had no participation in the Great Space Wars, though they are fully aware of the menace of the Xenophorms. So far, no Xenophorm has been known to duplicate a Clodhopper.

The home planet of the Clodhoppers is where most of the race lives. In actuality, there is some question of whether that is their home planet, or a prosperous colony of a much larger star empire otherwise unknown to the denizens of Common Space. For the most part the home planet of the Clodhoppers is off limits to visitors, but occasionally members of the race venture out into Common Space, often paying their way by acting in dramas that call for large menacing creatures.

Ironically, Clodhoppers are generally gentle, though clumsy, giants. This does not mean they are pacifists. Their officials and military can be quite arrogant and abrupt. Fortunately, the Clodhoppers who venture out amongst the other races on an individual basis are somewhat more convivial, though quite capable of holding up their end of a donnybrook. They are also capable of eating and gaining nourishment from almost anything, which can cause occasional problems. Excessive iron in their diet leads to immense growth spurts.

Clodhoppers have tried their hands with almost every class, but no one is making Colonial Trooper armor for them. If the Clodhoppers are making their own, they are keeping it home. As they are nearly invulnerable and can use most any weapon, they don't really miss it.

Similarly, very few cockpits or control rooms are built to hold a Clodhopper,

so very few can claim status as a Pilot except in their own ships. Agents they can be, but not in a role that depends on resembling the race spied upon. As Diplomats, Mercenaries, and Hunters, however, they can excel.

Clodhopper Special Abilities

- While a Clodhopper can pull an immense load and carry a load of a kiloton or more on their backs, their manipulative arms only give them the equivalent Strength of a strong human. Clodhoppers are +4 in Strength, to a maximum of 20. (+4 to attack and damage in melee)
- Clodhoppers spend most of their lives standing, even when sleeping, which they do in a crouched posture.
- Clodhoppers subtract 4 from their Dexterity scores unless they are solely surrounded by their own people in their own territory.
- Clodhoppers have a Damage Resistance of 10 and an AC 18. They would be 0(20) but they are +2 easier to hit because of their size.
- Clodhoppers are known to have more than two sexes. Apparently just how all that works out is one of the reasons access to their home planet is restricted.
- A Clodhopper's six eyes are on eyestalks and are fully mobile, making them very difficult to surprise.
- It is thought that Clodhoppers have a secondary brain that can handle most routine duties while a Clodhopper sleeps, or thinks. This extra brain also controls one of the Clodhopper's six eyes to maintain a "watch" while the rest of the organism sleeps.
- Clodhoppers can easily withstand attempts to knock them off their multitude of legs and can lower and raise themselves very adroitly, raising up on their back four legs to gain height.
- Unless taken by total surprise, a Clodhopper cannot be drowned, and does not suffer explosive decompression in vacuum. If kept in an absence of oxygen for a week or more they start suffocating. The process is measured in weeks, not minutes. See suffocation rules.
- Most poisons and diseases have no effect, though toxic and acidic chemicals can hurt them internally.

Clodhoppers who have Psychic powers (see Psychic Class) are apparently considered anathema to Clodhopper society. They are expelled into Common Space to find another role. Or perhaps this is just a ploy to get psychic Clodhopper spies into Common Space.

Zassarians (Skinnies, or Scalies)

Humans should never ask a Zassarian what "Hazrap" means. It is their derogatory name for humans and refers to a now extinct mammal-like creature that developed more or less in competition with the Zassarians. The connotations associated with the word, however, are very insulting to any humans who have the word explained to them. Best not to bring it up.

Skinnies are tailless scaled humanoids and very slim and tall. They are saurian, developing from dinosaur-like progenitors millennia ago. They have a form of warm bloodedness but are uncomfortable and sluggish in cold environments. They are hairless but have a top knot of scale-derived feathers and various sub-species have feathers in other areas of their bodies. Since they rarely wear any more covering than a utility harness to carry equipment, these attributes are easily discovered. All Skinnies are well-decorated with indelible body paint. Some of these decorations have to do with their position in society, the rest are simply decorative. They are oviparous and carry their genitalia internally unless in heat. Most non-Zassarians cannot tell male from female under normal circumstances. Domestically their mating customs are very similar to those of humans.

They developed as plains hunters and gatherers and later farmers, much as humans did. On their home planet, however, they live mostly underground to avoid the steadily more oppressive heat and constant gale force winds of the planetary surface. One result of this retreat underground was their concentration on bio-science, as they developed food plants and animals that could thrive in an underground environment.

Their racial government is a bureaucratic hegemony with a titular Hegemon as head of state. Central authority maintains control in varying degrees depending on the flow of Nest politics. Nests are their main political bodies, from which they derive their heritages. Their history is full of conflicts between the Nests before they entered space. They never had a global conflict like a World War II, but they suffered from constant fighting and assassination between the great Nests and their proxies. The expansion into space has tempered this activity, but the Nests are still bitter rivals.

While different Nests specialize in different areas of expertise, the major concentration in technology for the Skinnies has been bio-technology. Among other things, they hold the record for speed in deriving the Hole Drive from Oort Whales because of their expertise in things biological and its application to physics.

Zassarians entered interstellar space relatively recently because their astronomers detected signs of the impending death of their sun. The day of the expansion of their sun to beyond the orbit of their planet is not expected for centuries yet, but this doom united the perpetually warring Nests into two grand Projects.

Project Saving the Nest is an attempt to move their home world to a safer orbit. This is still ongoing and the Hegemon does not issue progress reports on it.

Project New Nest is a crash project to colonize the galaxy, started after they started harvesting Oort Whales in their Oort Cloud. So far this has resulted in the colonization of a couple score planets, participation in a three way war, and several million Zassarians no longer living under an imminent death threat. On their colony worlds they are again learning to appreciate open, relatively still, air.

Skinny Special Abilities

- Skinnies have high body heat that radiates greatly, making them -2 with skills in very cold environments. They can bundle up in human cold gear to avoid taking damage from cold, but that makes them -2 with skills, too.

- In extremely hot environments, on the other hand, Skinnies are unlikely to suffer from heat exhaustion.
- Skinnies have +2 Dexterities after rolls are made.
- Skinnies' home planet is about 2/3 the size of Earth. Subtract 2 from a Skinny's Strength score

Their connections with biological systems have made Skinnies very susceptible to the Zealot creed. Most Skinny Pilots are True Pilots.

Synthetic (Syntiacs)

In the course of the Space Wars, humanity opened all the sealed files and embarked on a course of regaining its former stature as producers of artificial intelligence. The initial goal was to produce Agent synthetics to seek out Xenophorm infiltrators and Hunter synthetics to destroy them. The research for these projects was merged with development of the Trooper armor.

Late in the wars, when Humans, Bugs, and Skinnies were joined as the Sentient Alliance against the Xenophorms, Human research was merged with Bug communication technology and Skinny mining robot technology to create self-motivating hunter-seekers. As a side project, Diplomat synthetics were developed to deal with interface problems between the three main Allies and contact smaller powers to bring them into the Alliance. In particular, the Bugs are more inclined to trust and work with synthetic representatives of other races than the actual races.

At the end of the war, Synthetics realized they were entirely self-aware and their creators were very nervous about the situation. What makes the situation even trickier is that there are entire planetoids devoted to synthetic creation entirely staffed by synthetics, thereby avoiding problems with self-contained environments. The Allies rapidly realized that no one but Synthetics knew where most of these planetoids might be.

Despite the doomsaying of the Zealots and the general nervousness around self-guiding intelligent machines, synthetics have no interest in Taking Over the Universe. They just want to survive as part of the new order of Common Space. Sometimes heated discussions continued for most of a Terran decade until the Final Protocols were devised and implemented. Synthetics accepted certain limitations in return for full access to Common Space and freedom to be treated as any other inhabitant.

The protocols are now integral to all Synthetic programming and, despite unsuccessful attempts to impose the apocryphal Three Laws of Robotics, the following became the governing Protocols.

Synthetics must follow contracts to the letter, as long as they agree to the contract.

Synthetics meant for combat must be obviously built for combat

Synthetics may not command warships (one-man fighters are allowed as long as they are under the direct command of a non-synthetic).

Law Enforcement synthetics must be armed solely with non-lethal weaponry

Synthetics come in a variety of shapes devised to make them most efficient at their work. Diplomat Synthetics are generally humanoid. Mercenary Synthetics have obvious targeting and weapon hardware built in. Pilot Synthetics are all Free Pilots and have all the necessary connections built in. Hunter Synthetics are the most diverse and come in a variety of shapes, depending on specific need. Agent synthetics are generally in the shape of another kind of Synthetic. Trooper Synthetics are humanoid with all the necessary attachments built in.

Synthetic Special Abilities

Each type of Synthetic is programmed with a chip providing all the basics for their class.

- ▶ Synthetics, due to their sturdy construction with industrial materials, add 2 their Constitution rolls.
- ▶ Synthetics, due to their lack of the life experience of a born sapient, subtract 2 from their Wisdom rolls.
- ▶ Synthetics are immune to poison and disease, though still susceptible to acid and similar toxic substances.
- ▶ Synthetics have a Damage Resistance of 2.

Synthetics cannot become Psychics.

Synthetics have adopted the racial name of Syntiacs, in honor of the first human thinking machines. This is generally ignored, much as most other official racial names are.

Zealot

Zealots are not a race per se, but a persuasion that has taken over the lives of members of several races, including some Xenophorms, some Clodhoppers, and even a couple of Bug hives. While they embrace technology, they avoid any technology with even a hint of artificial intelligence. There are several branches of this following but they learned early that to maintain their central principle, they have to present a united front against the use of electronic minds. They are officially accepting to synthetic beings, but avoid contact with them.

As might be expected, most True Pilots are Zealots. Because higher rank Trooper Armor has very high level artificial intelligence components, a Zealot cannot progress past 6th level as a Colonial Trooper.

Zealots wear clothing that covers most of their bodies, with only eyes and sometimes mouth showing. Zealots who have taken off their usual head covering demonstrate that both male and female humans shave their heads, Skinnies remove their topknot feathers, and of course Bugs and Clodhoppers have no hair or feathers to eradicate. Their clothing is often very tight to their bodies, showing their dedication to rigorous physical training regimens. Most Zealots are heavily tattooed or body painted.

Zealot Special Abilities

Zealots have all the special abilities of whatever race they derived from.

Bug, Skinny, and Clodhopper Zealots wear body coverings like their human

comrades.

- Because of their general distrust of artificial intelligence and intrusive electronics and those who depend on them, Zealots subtract 2 from their Charisma.
- Because of their constant physical conditioning, Zealots add 2 to their Strength to a maximum of 18. Zealot Clodhoppers still have the maximum of 20.

Many Zealots refuse to have Education Slots implanted and make use of conditioning regimens instead to learn the necessary basics for a Class.

Technology

While the people of Common Space are still waiting for their Transporters and Instant Creation devices, certain inventions have helped establish the society's differences and enhancements to the planet-bound society of 20th and 21st century Earth.

FTL Communication

There is FTL communication, but the "radio waves" don't propagate well near a star - transmitters and receivers don't work within 50 billion kilometers or so (about two light days) near an ordinary star, and the "path" has to not pass within about a light-year of any intervening stars (well, about a light-year for an ordinary star). Transmissions are directional ... there's no "broadcasting" of FTL signals; you point it at the receiving station.

This means that you need to establish lots of repeater stations in deep space, and transmit at regular "slower than light" speeds to and from these stations from the actual planetary surfaces. So: radio to FTL station (2 days) ... station transmits to another station, etc. down the line ... then down to the receiving planet (2 days) ... total 4 days plus a bit.

Relay stations are needed about every 10 light-years, on the average (more needed in clusters, clouds and clouds, less needed in voids and inter-galactic space). There's basically just one "frequency", and bandwidth won't support much more data than a grainy television picture and accompanying sound.

Gravitational disturbances can affect the FTL comm system, and of course the deep-space relay stations are very vulnerable. It uses a lot of power, and the equipment is large (at least 100 tons) and includes a small black hole. The equipment needs a reasonably skilled operator (even on the deep space stations). A lot of colonies don't bother ... ships can carry messages (or attack) about as fast.

The "systems of note" within the United Planets were all connected by FTL relay stations before the Xenophorm Wars. Many were destroyed and are only slowly being replaced. In general, new colony worlds are more likely to have a relay station than a devastated former colony.

It is theorized that relays established well outside of the plane of the Galaxy can be used to communicate usefully over very long distances. You still would have to establish relays to reach the 'edge' of the Rim, or a void area, and the actual

long-range station duty would be quite, quite lonely!

The automated stations used by the United Planets (and some other groups) on restricted systems and the like are scaled-back unmanned communication stations that generally just send a single message.

Space ships

There are two kinds of ships in Common Space. Hole Ships are ocean-liner-sized “mother ships” that are equipped with the Stanhope-Obegwa interstellar drive that essentially sets up a mini-black-hole in front of the ship and sets the ship into its own pocket universe within hyperspace that the Pilot must navigate to bring the ship to its destination. It then proceeds on Dean Drive (see below) anti-gravity propulsion to the neighborhood of a destination planet. Hole Ships are built in orbit and never voluntarily touch a planetary surface. Early Hole Ships were built to land in a gravity well, but the space considerations for all of the necessary drives made their payloads negligible.

From that point, cargo and passengers (or assault forces) are transshipped into ramjet equipped Dropships that carry their precious cargoes to the planetary surface (or satellite surface, or space station docking deck, etc.). Some dropships are equipped with Dean Drives, but these are mainly patrol ships and minor battle line ships who need speed and can sacrifice space for large engine areas.

Some Hole Ships are actually just frameworks containing navigational station, crew quarters, S-D Drive, and Dean Drive, with the various dropships making up the body of the ship. This works well for ships on regular schedules between established destinations, where the Hole Ship can be assured of having a similar-sized cargo going to its next destination.

Otherwise, Hole Ships are rugged ships with large hanger decks for dropships. Military Hole Ships are mostly Carriers, who carry their protective ships and attack or assault vessels through the Holes and then disperse them into a protective cloud of varying size, depending on the perceived threat level of the destination. The major powers in Common Space each maintain a battle line of non-carrier Hole Ships that match up to ancient descriptions of Battleships and Cruisers. Destroyer level and below ships are generally dropships. These combat-oriented ships are mostly kept in the inner system(s) of the race/affiliation.

Until the end of the wars, there were very few Hole Ships in private hands. Mostly they were owned by planetary governments and multi-planet corporations. A few had been taken over by pirates and hostile governments.

Since the end of the wars, ownership of Hole Ships has expanded greatly with the sudden dumping of military Hole Ships on the market. Suddenly, all but the most modern versions of military ships were ready for civilian ownership and use. De-militarized to some extent, but still armed with mid-range weapons, former battleships, cruisers, and assorted auxiliary vessels, as well as cargo and personnel carriers, are ready to carry almost anyone anywhere they want to go.

Because of their ability to generate a singularity similar to a black hole, Hole Ships are often forbidden by local regulations from coming within 10 planetary diameters of certain planets. The black hole singularity disappears when detached from a ship, but planetary authorities fear ships that try to ram planets.

This tactic was actually tried more than once during the Space Wars. It was a desperation move in every instance and all attempts were intercepted. Exactly what happens has not yet been established.

The Dean Drive

Originally The Dean Drive was a mocked failure publicized and derided in speculative fiction forums. The Dean Drive gained credibility when one was created in space and actually propelled a ship from Terra to Jupiter's orbit in three days with minimal fuel expenditure except that needed to keep the Drive going.stellar

Since those early explorations the Drive has been developed into a reactionless drive with high maneuverability. So far, its greatest drawback is its size, taking up more room than most reaction drives and being useless for anything smaller than a cruiser. The bigger the drive, the more efficient. It is not a fuelless drive, it does take power to use it, but the power used is far less than that needed by a ramjet or even plasma rocket.



Equipment

Ranged Weapons (Firearms) Table

Weapon	Dmg	RoF	Cap	Range (feet)	Weight (lb)	Cost (\$)
Revolver*	1d8	2	6	120	2	300
Auto Pistol (9mm)*	1d8	2	15	120	2.5	500
Revolver, heavy*	1d10	2	6	150	3	800
Rifle	2d8	2	5	600	8	1000
Shotgun	3d4	1	7	80***	6	300
Machine Pistol*	1d8**	2 (burst)	20	120	3	1,200
Submachine Gun (SMG)**	1d8	2 (burst)	32	150	6	1,000
Assault rifle	2d6	2/burst/ full	30	500	8	1,500
Sawed-off shotgun**	3d4-3	1	7	40***	5	300
Sniper rifle	2d8	1	5	800	20	5,000
Heavy sniper rifle .50	3d6	1	10	1000	30	8,000
Light MG	2d6+1	Burst/ full	100	1000	25	10,000
Heavy MG	3d6	Burst/ full	100	1200	100	15,000
Rocket launcher	6d6	1	1	600	5	2,200

RoF is Rate of Fire: The maximum number of projectiles that can be fired per combat round and/or whether the gun is capable of burst fire or full auto

* Concealable under jacket.

** Concealable under long coat.

*** The spread of shot is 5' either side of the point aimed at. Therefore, one shot can attack several targets. However, at beyond the first 60ft, targets get to make a save (DEX mod applies) for half damage

Note that the rocket launcher only gets one shot!

The butts of pistols, crossbows, or rifles may be used to strike in melee for 1d4 (pistol or crossbow) or 1d6 (rifle) points of damage.

AREA-EFFECT WEAPONS

The target automatically takes the damage. Anyone else within the radius near the target gets a dexterity saving throw to avoid damage (vehicle operators save for the entire vehicle by swerving out of the way); add +3 to save if there is cover available to duck under.

If the attack misses it overshoots by 1d4 x 10% of the range in a random direction; anyone in the radius gets a saving throw to avoid damage as above.

Area-Effect Weapons Table

Weapon	Dmg	RoF	Cap	Range (feet)	Weight (lb)	Cost (\$)
Grenade, smoke	1d4 (10 ft. radius)**	1	1	20	1	50
Grenade, concussion	2d6 (5 ft. radius)	1	1	20	1	50(M)
Grenade, fragmentation	2d8 (15 ft. radius)	1	1	20	1	50(M)
Rocket launcher	6d6 (10 ft. radius)	1	1	600	5	2,200(M)

* Concealable under jacket.

** Creates stationary cloud of smoke equivalent to Darkness power for 5 rounds.

Armor Table

Armour	AC	Cost (\$)
Light armor vest*	15	300
Heavy armor vest	16	600
Ballistic bodysuit*	15	3,000
Tactical Body Armor**	17	2,000
Shield, small	+1	100
Shield, large	+2	500
Space Suit****	12	100,000

* Light and concealable under or passes as clothing (unlike other armor).

** These armors are considered to be heavy, and encumber the wearer.

*** Shield and greaves may be used together.

**** Space suits provide life support power while worn and also encumber the user.

Other Equipment Table

Gear	Weight	Cost (\$)
Bug, audio	0.25	25
Camera, video, miniature	0.25	50
Climbing gear	15	500
Computer, Tablet	1.5	600
Flashlight (30 x 5' beam)	1	80
Handcuffs (Str save at -10 to break)	0.5	50
Headset radio	0.5	40
Medical kit	6	200
Night vision goggles (halve darkness penalties)	1	200
Parabolic microphone	5	2,500
Telescopic sight	0.5	80

Vehicles Table

Vehicle Type	AC	DR	HP	Mph	Seats	Cost (\$)	Weight (lbs.)
Tank	18	15*	28	4	4	200,000	100,000
APC**	18	12	21	45	2+11	400,000	27,000
Air Car (VTOL)	14	4	20	200	1+3	500k	2,000
Supersonic VTOL Jet*	15	5	60	1,200	2+6	200m	325,000
Utility VTOL**	15	3	20	180	190	13k	8,000

* Armed with tank gun, light machine gun, and heavy machine gun. Only heavy machine gun can elevate to hit targets above vehicle.

** May be fitted with light or heavy machine gun.

Trooper Suit Module Descriptions

The following modules must be bought for a Colonial Trooper's armor harness. They may be bought at any time, but can only be used if the Trooper is authorized to fill a slot on the suit with the module, as shown above.

Once purchased, the maintenance and replenishment of the equipment can be handled anywhere on civilized, or semi-civilized, worlds of Common Space.

1st Rank

+1 Aiming Reticule
Missile Counterrocket
Light
Smoke Rockets
Sleep Gas Projector
Spotter Drone
Hover jets
Psionic Detector
Self-Healing Kit
Auto Gun
Small Flamer
Strength Boost x2
Y-Launcher

2nd Rank

+2 Aiming Reticule
Chameleon Cloak
Claymore Mines
Jump Jets
DR +2
AC +2
Psionic Defense
Sunlight generator
Doorbreaker Charges
Aid Kit
Large Flamer
X Launcher

3rd Rank

+3 Aiming Reticule
Radar
Flight Pack
Shield Wall (one person wall projector)
Dr +3 (cannot be used with +2 above)
AC +4 (CAN be used with above)
Psionic Deflector
Hellfire Rockets Type I
Plasma Blaster Mark I
Armor Slicer Model I
Triage Kit
Strength Boost 18 (not compatible with previous module)

4th Rank

+4 Aiming Reticule
Stopper Bomb
Hyperflight Pack
Mass Chameleon Field
Spy Remote
Dr +4 (cannot be used with DRs above)
AC +4 (CAN be used with above)
Squad Wall
Purge Kit
Universal Translation Kit
Bomb Slinger
Trooper Second
Mental Spoofer
Hellfire Rockets Type II
Plasma Blaster Mark II
Armor Slicer Model II

5th Rank

+5 Aiming Reticule
Death Cloud
Brain Drain
Mass Stopper
Wall Breaker
Dr +5 (cannot be used with DRs above)
AC +5 (CAN be used with above)
Platoon Wall (Wall Projector)
Last Chance Kit
Trooper Third
Hellfire Rockets Type III
Plasma Blaster Mark III
Armor Slicer Model III
Baby Nuke
Strength Boost 25 (+5 to hit and damage)

Stand Alone Equipment

The following gear can be purchased by any adventurer at any time in the character's career.

Weapons

Armor Slicer I
Armor Slicer II
Armor Slicer III
Auto Gun 3x2d6 gun
Baby Nuke 200pts Burst + Disease
+ Poison
Baton
Brain Drainer
Claymore Mines
Crossbow
Death Cloud Bomb
Flamer Small
Flamer Large
Handgun
Hellfire Rockets Type I
Hellfire Rockets Type II
Hellfire Rockets Type III
Net Gun
Pandy Bat
Peashooter
Plasma Blaster Mark I
Plasma Blaster Mark II
Plasma Blaster Mark III
Shiv
Sleep Gas Bomb
Stunner
Vibro-dagger
Wall Breaker Charge

Other Equipment

Armor
Auto Doc
Booster Drugs
Camp Gear
Camp Lantern
Chameleon Cloak
Education Chips
Flashlight
Flight Pack
Jump Belt
Language Facilitator
Last Chance Kit
Mass Chameleon Projector
Mass Tangle foot Projector
Med Kit
Radar Detector
Psionic Chameleon Kit
Psionic Detector
Psionic Repeller
Psionic Shield
Purge Kit
Shock pads
Smoke Bombs
Spotter Drone
Spy Remote
Strength Boost
Tanglefoot Field
Telescope
Telescopic Sight
Triage Kit
Universal Translator
Wall Projector
Wide Spectrum Goggles

Equipment Descriptions

Function: A short description of the equipment's basic functions

Cost: The price in Credits at a normal supplier's store. Prices in the field may differ

Encumbrance: An indication of how much of the weight a character can carry and still operate normally the item takes up. If the Equipment adds up to more than the Strength of the character, combat and some STs (GM Discretion) are reduced by the difference because of weight and/or awkwardness.

Aiming Reticule

Function: Increase Attack Chance (Only Usable on Trooper Armor)

Cost: 1000 cr * Quality of Reticule

Encumbrance: 0

This addition to a Trooper's helmet allows him to add the quality of the reticule to his chance of hitting with any system of the suit, including the suit strength.

Armor

Function: Protective

Cost: 1000cr * AC Effect

Encumbrance: Depends on AC rating. Trooper Armor has no actual Encumbrance

This protective gear is AC; For DR, see Shock Pads.

Armor Slicer

Function: project a line of force capable of piercing any armor

Cost: 3,000 cr per d12 of effect

Encumbrance: Model I = 4, Model II and III = 7

This Bug weapon projects a line of force with Armor Piercing (AP) damage. The AP effect negates points of Damage Resistance in the target. The line is a meter wide and affects every target along the line. Each Model carries a 6 shot "clip."

Model I does 2d12 damage with 3 points AP to 60'

Model II does 3d12 damage with 6 points AP to 120'

Model III does 4d12 damage with 12 points AP to 240'

Auto Doc

Function: Stabilize wounds, cure hit points, and negate disease and poisons

Cost: For Trooper Suits, the cost is 5000 credits.

Encumbrance: 20 unless part of a Trooper suit, when it is 0

It is good for 50 x level of Trooper hit points in wounds, disease effects, and poison effects.

For standalone units that must deal with more than one patient, the cost is 10,000 credits and it does not work on anyone that has not undergone a diagnosis cycle with it. There is an additional 5,000 credit charge for each person (of any race) who is making use of it.

Auto Gun

Function: Assault Rifle

Cost: 2000 cr

Encumbrance: 4

Maglev railgun rifle that shoots bursts of high velocity slugs. Roll 3d20 to see how many shots hit of the three fired, each does 2d6 damage. Clips of 150 shots, expended 3 at a time. Range is 500' (150m)/2000' (600m)/5000' (1500m/1.5km). Chance of hitting goes down by 1 for every increment of range.

Baby Nuke

Function: Blow things up real good

Cost: 100,000 cr

Encumbrance: 7

This is the smallest of the nuclear weapons available. Bigger ones are only usable with missiles, generally fired by space ships. The burst is a quarter mile radius, all within that radius take 200 pts of blast damage (force and heat) and must make Con Saves versus Disease and Poison of value 20. These weapons are made to not spread beyond the radius above, but prevailing winds can spread contaminated soil and remnants. Anyone within a quarter mile of the outer edge of the main blast radius takes 4d20+20 blast damage and 2d10 poison and disease effect.

Baton

Function: Non-Lethal hand-to-hand weapon

Cost: 10-200Cr

Encumbrance: 1

This is a general term for club weapons used by law enforcement to subdue malefactors without killing them. It does 1d6 plus Strength modifier non-lethal damage. Martial Artists can use it for lethal effect.

Booster Drugs

Function: Temporarily Enhance physical attribute (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution)

Cost: 5,000 cr each

Encumbrance: 0

Each dose of these drugs, which are tailored for the race using them, adds 1d6 to the designated attribute for two hours. These are controlled drugs and should not be used more than once per day. Every extra dose consumed after the initial dose in a 24 hour period causes a Constitution ST. Failure of the roll means the character collapses in agony for minutes equal to the amount of failure. Each use also increases the ST needed by 1 for the next dose.

Brain Drainer

Function: Disables brain functions

Cost: 2,000 cr

Encumbrance: 1

This weapon causes a temporary synaptic disarray in the target (Constitution ST). For 2d12 minutes, the victim is unable to put two thoughts together into an action. If supported he can walk, and they are usually docile, but they are useless for almost any activity until they recover. Clodhoppers affected by this weapon universally go into a primitive berserk

state immediately and no one, friend or foe, is safe until he comes out of it.

Camp Gear

Function: Camping gear for temperate climates

Cost: 2000 cr

Encumbrance: 4

This very light pack contains a tent, sleeping bag, air mattress, cooking gear, and dried trail food for five days. It wraps up and folds down to a package easily stored in a knapsack.

Camp Lantern

Function: Light up an encampment

Cost: 500 cr

Encumbrance: 1

This lantern provides light for a 100 ft radius. The light can be modified to just project infrared, or ultraviolet, or some other wavelength so that only those who have the right setting on their goggles can see by the light. The lantern can be focused in one direction, or provide a 360 degree illumination.

Chameleon Cloak

Function: Provide camouflage for one wearer

Cost: 6,000 cr

Encumbrance: Carried = 0, Deployed = 4

This garment comes in a number of sizes and shapes but its basic utility is to make the wearer invisible by bending light around the wearer so a watcher sees only what is behind the wearer. It can cover a Mercenary and all his weaponry, but attacking with the weaponry essentially makes him visible to his target, at least. This is an object that is higher Encumbrance because of the awkwardness of doing anything else while wearing it. Its weight is negligible.

Clandestine Mines

Function: Proximity Bombs set off when disturbed

Cost: 8,000 cr for a rack of 4

Encumbrance: 1 each

These mines can be laid in the path of oncoming enemies, or shot in patterns from Y and X Launchers to deal with oncoming or intercepting hostiles. When activated by the proximity of a hostile (by an air pressure switch set to let small creatures pass unmolested), the mine sets off a minor explosion that catapults the device to waist height on a human, the explodes the actual explosion that does 2d10 damage in a 20' radius.

Crossbow

Function: Any primitive missile weapon, including bows, crossbows, slings, etc.

Cost: 50 cr

Encumbrance: 4

This is a weapon one might find in the hands of Angry Natives (see creatures). It has a range of perhaps 50 meters and does 1d6 damage. GM can alter these numbers if called for by the needs of the scenario. Crossbow is the generic term used by Troopers who run into such weapons. GMS

wishing to introduce the full panoply of pre-gunpowder weaponry into the game may get statistics from one of the fantasy games in the OE series.

Death Cloud Bomb

Function: Poison everything in its radius

Cost: 10,000 cr each

Encumbrance: 1

This Skinny-devised weapon puts out a poison cloud for 5 combat rounds in a 30' (9 meters) radius. The poison is a toxic mixture that reacts with flesh whether breathed or not. A strong wind moves the cloud 10' (3m) a round, and the substance of the cloud hangs together in the same radius in any wind short of a 200 mph hurricane. The cloud is slightly heavier than Earthlike atmospheric density and flows into any depressions and/or tunnels leading down.

Education Chips

Function: provide basic knowledge of skills and duties

Cost: 500 cr

Encumbrance: 0

Most citizens of the Allied star nations have surgically implanted chip slots that education chips can be slipped into. The chip provides the basic knowledge of what a character needs to deal with the duties of his class. There is only one slot per person, more tends to confuse them. When a chip is slipped in, much of the basic material of a previous class goes away, though some abilities are usually so familiar to the user that he can continue using them. Children are given general purpose chips that acquaint them with the basics of their civilization. Some Zealots use these chips, usually because they became Zealots after having a slot implanted, others use special Readers that they can access with the right chemical help.

Flamer

Function: project flame to burn targets

Cost: Small 400 cr, Large 1000 cr

Encumbrance: Small 1, Large 4

The Flamer is a human weapon used by Troopers on raids where the object is to do maximum damage to flame susceptible buildings and people. The large Flamer projects a 4d4 Cone of flame damage that burns as long as there are flammables available and spread to others. The small Flamer just projects a 2d4 Cone with similar effects. The small flamer is generally carried as a secondary weapon.

Flashlight/Light

Function: Light limited area at night

Cost: 50 cr for sturdy combat light

Encumbrance: 0

This device can light up a narrow cone in the direction it is pointed, with some bleed light to the sides. Its range is no more than 30 meters (100 ft).

Flight Pack

Function: Allow the character to fly for a period of time

Cost: 12,000 cr

Encumbrance : 4

This flight pack uses mini jets to allow the user to fly at 200 mph for an hour. Flying slower saves fuel in direct proportion (for easy on the fly computation).

Handgun

Function: small slug thrower

Cost: 200Cr

Encumbrance: 1

This weapon is a gunpowder projectile weapon carried when larger weapons are too cumbersome for the situation. It has an accurate range of 50' (15m) and does 1d8+2 damage. It has a clip of 10 shots. This is a simple standin for a large collection of handguns available to the PCs. It can be concealed relatively easily.

Hazmat Suit

Function: Protect user from air loss, noxious gases, ambient radiation

Cost: 10,000Cr

Encumbrance: 1 if carried, 7 if worn (part of Trooper Armor)

This lightweight but restricting suit can be used as an interim spacesuit (it has no internal air supply) and is generally used where it is uncertain what the environmental hazards are.

Hellfire Rockets

Function: Blow things up

Cost: 1500 cr/rocket for Type I, 4,000cr/rocket for Type II, 6,000 cr/rocket for Type III

Encumbrance: 4 per single rocket, 7 for a rack of 3

Named in honor of the favored munition from the late 20th/early 21st centuries, These rockets are about the same size for every Mk, but the bang gets bigger. The buyer is paying for the miniaturization of the explosive. The rockets have a range of 10 miles and come in two types. The High Explosive (HE) rockets have a radius of effect of 5' per die of effect. The AP rockets have just the 25' (8m) radius in every size, but they punch through DR of 1 point per die of rocket.

Type I Hellfire Rocket 5d6 burst

Type II Hellfire Rocket 9d6 burst

Type III Hellfire Rocket 12d6 burst

Jump Belt

Function: Allow user to leap small buildings with a single bound

Cost: 2,000 cr

Encumbrance: 1

This jump belt comes standard with the Trooper Armor, but non-Troopers can get harnesses (no one knows where the "belt" term comes from) that allow them the same facility with jumping and adds 4" to normal movement as long as the user doesn't mind moving in short hops, as if a Terran running on Mars.

These "belts" are popular with civilians for various sporting uses.

Language Facilitator

Function: translate the common languages of Common Space

Cost: 500 cr

Encumbrance: 0

This device allows the user to speak to all the other races of Common Space in their accepted lingua franca. Unless specially programmed, the device does not translate Bug into Portuguese, or Spanglish into obscure Nest languages of the Zassarians.

Last Chance Kit

Function: Limited Revivification

Cost: 10,000 per "Charge" It comes with one charge

Encumbrance: 1

This kit can be hooked up to a recently deceased target's vital centers and has a limited chance per charge of bringing the person back to life. The victim must make a Constitution Saving Throw, with the number of Hit Points the character is negative added to the ST number to be made. The Skill Throw of the user in Medicine can be added to the throw.

Mass Chameleon Projector

Function: Make large formations invisible

Cost: 25,000cr

Encumbrance: Must be carried and set up on site

This device consists of three or more projectors that set up a chameleon field that bends light around the shielded object and makes it hard to find visually. The field works on all EMF radiation bands. The projector carries a six hour battery, it can also be hooked up to a vehicle's power source. It can also be fixed to cover a vehicle while moving, but the chance of detecting a moving chameleon field of that size is much greater (GM Determination).

Mass Tangle foot Projector

Function: Hold large groups of hostiles still

Cost: 40,000cr

Encumbrance: Must be carried and set up on site

This device consists of four or more projectors that set up a field of 30 ST if the projectors are set less than 30' apart. More separation reduces the strength of the field.

Med Kit

Function: Heal wound damage

Cost: 1,000cr, 1,000cr to replace its expended repair supplies

Encumbrance: 1

This small automated aid kit can be implanted in a Trooper suit (it is standard issue for the military) and it immediately acts to repair damaged flesh and bone. It has capacity to repair 20 hit points, which it does 2d4 points at a time. It acts at the end of a combat round, so a character killed by damage during the round gets no help from it.

Missile Counter Rocket

Function: Shoot down attacking missiles

Cost: 10,000cr for a 5 rocket rack

Encumbrance: 7

The user of these rockets is aided by a limited capacity synthetic brain (making this a very iffy weapon for use by Zealots) that detects incoming missiles and automatically fires a counter rocket to stop it. The intercepted missile blows up causing 3d6 damage in a 25 ft globe. Counterrockets have a range of 1 mile. (1.6km)

Net Gun

Function: Capture device for felons and wild beasts

Cost: 500 CR, has 5 charges. Reloads cost 200Cr

Encumbrance: 4 (not usually a part of Trooper Armor)

This device is meant to capture people and beasts by wrapping them in a net. The common version has a range of 60' (18m) and fills a 5x5 area with netting. The netting is reinforced monofilament wire and has a damage resistance of 8 and 10 hit points. It can be removed with a non-lethal damaging attack.

Radar/Radar Detector

Function: Detect otherwise invisible targets and detect other radars

Cost: 1,000 cr

Encumbrance: 1

This fits on a combat helmet, or as part of Trooper Armor. It detects objects out to five miles and also lets the wearer know that radar is being used on the wearer.

Pandy Bat

Function: represent pre-gunpowder hand to hand weapons

Cost: 25 cr

Encumbrance: 4

Pandy Bat is a padded staff used to train troops in hand to hand combat with long weapons. Troopers apply the term to any such weapons used by Angry Natives (see Creatures). GMs wishing to introduce the full panoply of pre-gunpowder weapons to the game are referred to the fantasy games in this series. A Pandy Bat may do anything from d4 to d10 damage depending on its size and the strength of the Angry Native or Gangboy wielding it.

Peashooter

Function: Represent gunpowder ranged weapons

Cost: 50-200 cr

Encumbrance: 4

Peashooter is the derogatory term used by Troopers for gunpower weapons used by Angry Natives or sometimes colonial militia. They can actually be dangerous in hostile hands. Accuracy may be iffy, depending on how they are made. Peashooters fire slugs that travel slower but pack more mass than Trooper Auto Guns, and do damage between 1d6 and 1d10. More modern ones autofire in the same way Auto Guns do.

Plasma Blaster

Function: Project a Cone of sun-hot plasma

Cost: 2,000cr per d8 of damage

Encumbrance: Mark I Blaster 4, Mark II and Mark III 7

This Skinny infantry weapon is a remarkably non-discriminating short range projector of superhot plasma. It does not so much burn as disintegrate its targets, or at least part of them.

Plasma Blaster Mark I 3d8 Cone 6000Cr

Plasma Blaster Mark II 6d8 Cone 12,000Cr

Plasma Blaster Mark III 8d8 Cone 16,000Cr

Psionic Chameleon Kit

Function: Make a psychic think they are seeing the wrong target

Cost: 6,000cr

Encumbrance: 1

Psionic Detector

Function: Detect the use of psychic power in the area

Cost: 2,000cr

Encumbrance: 4

Psionic Repeller (incompatible with Psionic Shield)

Function: Add 5 to the Wearer's Charisma ST roll defending against a psychic attack.

Cost: 8,000cr

Encumbrance: 1

Psionic Shield (Incompatible with Repeller)

Function: Subtract 5 from effect of any psychic attack on user.

Cost: 8,000cr

Encumbrance: 1

Purge Kit

Function: Rid the body of disease and/or poison

Cost: 4,000 cr

Encumbrance: 1

This automated aid device injects a stream of nanobots whose function is to rid the body of all vestiges of known diseases, known poisons, and biological agents that seem to be harming the body. This last element makes use a bit chancy. The programming is good, but all bodily functions are not necessarily fully mapped. The recipient must make a Constitution ST or take 1d4 reduction to one attribute, which can be determined randomly or by GM discretion.

Shiv

Function: Represent one-handed melee weapons

Cost: 10-100 cr

Encumbrance: 0-1

This is the derogatory Trooper term for metal knives, swords, hand axes, and like weapons. They do between d4 and d10 damage, depending on size and strength of user. In a back alley or the hands of a master, they can be very dangerous. Many Agents and Hunters, and some Mercenaries and Pilots, keep such weapons handy for special situations.

Shock Plates

Function: Provide Damage Resistance

Cost: 3,000cr * DR

Encumbrance: 1 per DR

These custom-formed concoctions of ceramics and plastic are damage absorbing plates that can be worn with any normal armor. They are integral to Trooper Armor but must be paid for if starting Trooper as a new class.

Sleep Gas Bomb

Function: Explosive device that spreads a cloud of knockout gas

Cost: 3,000Cr

Encumbrance: 1 per bomb (Trooper Armor slot carries 4)

This gas is a contact substance that knocks out its targets in a 30' radius. Constitution ST to avoid the effect in open air, or Dexterity ST in enclosed space with exits that the victims have to move through.

Smoke Rockets/Bombs

Function: Put out line of smoke to block vision and other targeting senses

Cost: 1,000Cr per 2 rockets or bombs

Encumbrance: 1 per 2 rockets

These fire and discard rockets (bomb throwers are part of Trooper Module) have a range of 300' (90m). 60' before the intended end of the shot, smoke issues out, creating a line of dense smoke about 3' (1m) wide. The smoke blocks normal and ultraviolet frequencies and is hot enough to block Infrared. It also contains miniscule chaff that expands to block radar and it distorts sound waves.

Sniper Rifle

Function: Kill targets at an extended Range

Cost: 4,000 Cr

Encumbrance: 7

These Maglev railgun rifles do 3d6 damage with 6 pts of AP at extended range. Their encumbrance includes the telescopic sight that can be used as a regular telescope and the stabilizing gear. They have one range – 10,000' (3000m). If a target beyond that range is visible, the sniper has a -2 chance of hitting it, purely because it might move before the bullet gets there. The clip holds 5 shots.

Spotter Drone

Function: Fly over the battlefield and send pictures back to handler

Cost: 25,000 Cr

Encumbrance: Must be carried.

This is a very small VTOL drone that is almost impossible to see and hear while in the sky. The visuals from the drone can be repeated to Trooper Armor and Wide Spectrum Goggles, allowing the user to send indirect fire toward the target. It flies at up to 300mph (480km/hr) for an hour. Reducing the speed increases the duration in proportion. Minimum is 30mph for 10 hours.

Spy Remote

Function: Send information back to handler

Cost: 50,000Cr

Encumbrance: 1

This baseball-sized device can be shot from a rocket or bomb. It lands

safely and then moves quietly and quickly around the area. Unlike the drone, it moves on the ground and can stay perfectly still, sending a 360 degree view of its surroundings. It can also be set to send information in microbursts to keep the transmission from being detected. Maximum speed is 30mph for 10 hours. Stationary it can dwell for 100 hours.

Strength Boost

Function: Exoskeletal Strength

Cost: 1000 cr * Strength Value

Encumbrance: 1

This exoskeleton gives the wearer the specified Strength. This substitutes for the strength of the wearer, rather than adds to it. The amount that can be lifted or carried by the suit wearer is multiplied tenfold.

Stunner

Function: Paralyze target with non-lethal damage

Cost: 1000Cr

Encumbrance: 1

This descendent of the Taser puts out a disabling electrical charge to a range of 60' (18m). Target must make a Con ST or be disabled for a number of rounds equal to the amount he missed the roll by. Trooper Armor does not have a slot for this weapon.

Tanglefoot Field (Stopper Bomb)

Function: Restraint Device

Cost: 2,000 cr * Strength Rating

Encumbrance: 1

This device, when activated, creates a field of restraining force at Strength equal to its rating. The field is the same size as a Hellfire III Burst and anyone trying to move through it has to struggle against the Strength of the Field. Permanent facilities frequently have fields much stronger than anything that can be brought into the field. A Stopper Bomb is self-contained and has enough power for 10 minutes.

Telescope

Function: Bring far away items closer visually

Cost: 500Cr

Encumbrance: 1

This is a device for looking at a target and bringing him closer visually. Reduces penalties for range so a target that is a dot on the edge of vision suddenly becomes fully visible. The Wide Spectrum Goggles have a similar item built in

Telescopic Sight

Function: Increase accuracy of rifle shot

Cost: 1000 Cr

Encumbrance: 1 (does not add to a rifle it is mounted on)

The telescopic sight brings the target closer to the shooter and lets him shoot as if at short range.

Triage Kit

Function: Heals d8+2 damage, stops bleeding, and diagnoses other ailments, diseases and poisons.

Cost: 3,000cr per charge, can hold 5 charges

Encumbrance: 1

Trooper Second and Trooper Third

Function: Assist Troopers in Combat

Cost: 50,000cr

Encumbrance: Only used in Trooper suits, so unimportant

These devices are very near to Synthetics in independence and acuity, but are not considered true Synthetics. Some Troopers who have them beg to differ.

Each is one more Trooper in the same armor capable of handling the weaponry and other systems. On a Trooper's turn, the Trooper and the Trooper Second and the Trooper Third (if all three are present) all get an action at the same capability. Each has to use a separate weapon system and there is only one movement for this joint being.

Universal Translator

Function: Translate all known languages to one the user can understand

Cost: 5000 cr

Encumbrance: 0

This relatively small device allows the user to understand all the languages, both written and spoken, known in Common Space. If the user makes an Intelligence Skill Throw, he can translate ancient dialects, and pick up on new slang that hasn't been updated on the Translator. There are adapters to allow speech with those who speak underwater or in inhearable ranges or by light flashes, etc. If the languages is totally new to Common Space or is so ancient that there is no record of it in any archive and no connection with any current language, the user is out of luck.

Vibro-Dagger

Function: Useful stabbing and cutting weapon

Cost: 100 cr

Encumbrance: 0

A device that looks like a knife handle, but it projects a blade that vibrates extremely fast and does 1d6+2 damage plus Strength Bonus.

Wall Breaker

Function: Shaped charge that makes man-sized holes in walls

Cost: 1000Cr per charge

Encumbrance: 1 per charge

These charges are pasted on a wall and set off 2-10 seconds later, depending on how they are set. They do 8d4 damage, with 8 points AP. "Pasting" can be done by launching them with a portable Y or X Launcher, though they may not hit the exact place needed, if exactitude is wanted.

Wall Projector

Function: Project a Force Wall to protect a group of targets.

Cost: 7,000 for basic set of 3 projectors, +3,000 per extra projector

Encumbrance: Must be carried. Can be set up on moving vehicle on flat

road/plain

Projects a 0AC/20AAC Wall of translucent force covering 30' between projectors at a height of 20'. This is essentially a concentrated Tanglefoot Field that deflects force and radiations. A sharpshooter or a lucky shot can penetrate it to hit the target, but the attacker must roll twice, once for the wall and once for the target (at the target's usual AC/AAC) because of the distortion effect of the field.

Wide Spectrum Goggles

Function: Allows user to perceive all the visual EMF radiations

Cost: 10,000cr

Encumbrance: 1

These goggles have different lenses for different wavelengths and attach to a standard combat helmet, where they can be changed with a shrug or other quick method.

Y Launcher and X Launcher

Function: Throw 2 bombs at once to each side of a Trooper

Cost: 5,000Cr for "Y", 8,000 for "X"

Encumbrance: Only usable with Trooper Armor and military vehicles

The Y-Thrower can actually throw three bombs at once, one to each side and one left behind as the Trooper Jumps. As might be expected, training on when to use the leave behind bomb is intense. The X Launcher throws two bombs to each side, one often at a longer range than the other. Often used for projecting multiple Smoke Bombs or Sleep Gas Bombs. The Launcher is usually set for 100' (30m) but it can be set for as close as 30' and as far as 250'.

Special Abilities

Martial Disciplines

As might be expected, Martial Arts has continued to develop over the centuries of human development. All human and Skinny Mercenaries and Troopers are trained in Martial Arts. Human Agents and Hunters are also trained in the Martial Arts, and can use their Skills to increase their ability beyond the normal. Diplomats and Pilots and most non-humans are not so trained as a matter of course, but they can gain proficiency by training allowed by the Game Master. Education Chips (see Equipment) are available to teach the basics of Martial Arts.

Martial Arts allow the practitioner to add +2 to her hand-to-hand attacks success chance and +2 to her bare handed and melee weapon damage. She gains +2 AC/AAC defense vs melee attacks.

Mental Disciplines

Psionics is still a very shaky science in Common Space. It is possible for a character to become a Psychic as well as their usual class. Every time a character rises from one level to another in her chosen class, she may choose to gain psychic powers. THIS IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY. If a player does not want the complications and certain disadvantages of playing a psychic character, she need not do so. The Character can go through her career without ever hearing a voice in her head. If the Psychic choice is made, it is called Awakening Talent.

Psionics takes a great deal out of a practitioner and reduces their general health. The Awakened Talent immediately loses 1 Hit Point permanently, and loses 1 further Hit Point every time she goes up 1 level in Psychic power. The Talent can also lose temporary Hit Points through Feedback. See below.

Awakened Talents know when another Talent is in the area, whether friend or foe. This is an “itch at the back of the neck” sensation and has no directionality, although a rough approximation of range and direction can be determined by “following the itch.”

Psionic powers are controlled by Charisma. To use the power, the Talent must make the Skill Throw of her class, with a Charisma bonus. Failure of the roll causes Feedback. Feedback means the character takes Hit Point damage equal to the number by which she failed the roll. This is non-lethal damage. She can try again on the next round. It cannot be changed out for another power.

Once acquired, a psychic power is permanent.

Table 11: Psychic Powers

Base Level of Psionic	Hit Point Subtraction	Psionic Powers Ranks				
		1	2	3	4	5
2	-1	1	–	–	–	–
3	-2	2	–	–	–	–
4	-3	2	1	–	–	–
5	-4	2	2	1	–	–
6	-5	2	2	1	1	–
7	-6	2	2	2	1	1
8	-7	2	2	2	2	2
9	-8	3	3	3	2	2
10	-9	3	3	3	3	3



Psychic Powers

1st Level

Aura Illumination
Aura Shock
Detect Animosity
Empathic Cure
Empathic Translation
ESP
Read Surface Thoughts

2nd Level

Command
Empathic Boost
Empathic Link - Animals
Minor Psychometry
Paralyse Foe
Read recent memory
Telekinesis 1d6

3rd Level

Cloak Psionics
Detect Malignity
Diagnose
Major Psychometry
Photonic Field
Psionic Shock
Translation

4th Level

Aura Field
Boosted Empathic Heal
Empathic Link - Non-Animals
Neutralize Molecules
Psi Blade
Telepathic Communication

5th Level

Clairsentience
Empathic Sustenance
Impose Command
Mind Probe
Remote Telekinesis
Revivify
Summon Lesser Minds



Psychic Power Descriptions

For every contested Charisma ST called for in these power descriptions, use the ST needed to perform the power as the psychic's roll unless some extenuating circumstances call for more than one roll, in which case the performance roll becomes the first roll called for.

Aura Field (4th Level)

Duration: Special, see below

Range: Self

The Psychic can put up the Aura Field at any time, including out of turn in reaction to a sudden threat. It forms a field of damage absorbing psychic energy that stops physical damage equal to the character's Charisma. Each time the field is struck (autofire attacks count as 1 attack) the psychic must make a Charisma ST or the field goes down and the attack succeeds. It can be re-established on the character's next combat turn.

Aura Illumination (1st Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: 60 feet (18 meters)

This is an early Telekinesis (TK) effect. The psychic illuminates a 30' radius globe of light bright enough to read in. The globe stays in one place once established. It cannot be put on an object and carried around.

Aura Shock (1st Level)

Duration: Until activated

Range: Self

This is another early TK power that establishes a field around the psychic affecting the first person to touch the psychic aggressively. The toucher takes 3d6 physical damage. The damage is blocked by Damage Resistance and the total damage cannot exceed the actual Charisma value of the psychic.

Boosted Empathic Heal (4th Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

The psychic can heal another character (or himself) for 3d8 hit points. The healer takes 1d6 points of lethal empathic damage. The damage happens first. If it incapacitates the healer the healing does not happen.

Clairsentience (5th Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 120' (36m)

The psychic can look anywhere within range, no matter how many walls intervene. The image and sounds are heard as if the psychic was standing at a point within the area. The viewpoint can be turned 360 degrees. If being put into unfamiliar territory the viewpoint should be as close to the specified distance as possible. If the psychic is familiar with the area, she can place the viewpoint wherever she chooses as long as it is within the power's range.

Cloak Psionics (3rd Level)

Duration: Until activated

Range: Touch

This power allows the psychic to make himself or a target invisible to mental powers. Anyone using a remote sensing power on the recipient must make a Charisma ST vs the psychic's Charisma ST. If the psychic's throw success ties or surpasses the ST success of the sensor, the sensor does not see or hear the target of the spell and cannot see through her eyes (as with ESP). It similarly blocks Read Mind powers and Mind Probes. This protection is then active for 10 minutes. It must be renewed to stop later sensor attempts, even if in the same round.

Command (2nd Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: Within hearing range

The psychic makes the usual Charisma ST to use the power, and the target also makes a Charisma ST. If the psychic matches or exceeds the success level of the target, he can make the target perform one action. This action cannot be obviously dangerous to the target, such as "shoot yourself." However, if the target has not seen the commander or his group callously abusing prisoners, he responds to a command to "Surrender." Complex commands such as "Put your gun down, kick it over to me, and raise your hands," gets a limited response (he might put his gun down) or none.

Detect Animosity (1st Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: 60'

With this power, the psychic can determine that one or more specific people in the same area hate him and/or his group. It does not work on a Cloaked hater.

Detect Malignity (3rd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 60'

This is similar to Detect Animosity, but the attitude detected is a general attitude of hatred and nastiness that may or may not be directed at Our Heroes. It is essentially equal to a fantasy game's Detect Evil.

Diagnose (3rd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

The psychic can determine what is ailing the target, whether poison or disease. Some effects are very hard to determine and the psychic can get a confused reading but knows there is something wrong.

Empathic Boost (2nd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

The psychic can increase any attribute of himself or another by 1d6. This is similar to an adrenaline rush, and the recipient of the boost is depleted by 2d6 in that attribute for 30 minutes after the Boost is over.

Empathic Cure (1st Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

The Healer can cure 1d6+6 hit points of damage in the target. The Healer takes the 1d6 roll in lethal damage. The two results happen simultaneously, so the Healer could fall even as he heals the target.

Empathic Link – Animals (2nd Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: 30' (9m)

The psychic can communicate emotions with a non-sapient creature and persuade the animal to give assistance. With competing Charisma STs, the psychic can also break a mental command given to an animal. This can also be used to get an idea of the empathic state of sapients, but no command is possible.

Empathic Link - Sapient (4th Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: 30' (9m)

The psychic can form an empathic bond with a sapient (intelligent) creature, and with a competing Charisma ST contest impress the sapient with a needed emotion, such as curiosity, instead of hostility. Emotional attitudes can be communicated with this power.

Empathic Sustenance (5th Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

This power is used to provide nourishment for the target. If the target has lost hit points due to starvation, disease, or poison, this power gives them 1d6 back at the cost of 1 hit point damage to the psychic for every d6 provided.

Empathic Translation (1st Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 30' (9m)

The psychic can determine the emotional state of all parties in a conversation. The GM may penalize the ST if any of the parties are particularly alien in thought processes.

ESP (1st Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 60'

The psychic can see what is behind a wall or door if there is a conscious entity on the other side. Essentially, he hitchhikes the eyes of the entity and sees what the entity sees. A further Charisma ST test can influence the entity to shift vision to see other inhabitants, but a failure alerts the entity that something is controlling his or her actions.

Impose Command (5th Level)

Duration: Until saved against

Range: 60' (18m)

The psychic makes a Charisma ST contest against the target. If successful, the target becomes the slave of the psychic. If unsuccessful, the target is immune to this attack for the rest of this encounter. The target can also try a Charisma contest to break free against the psychic any time it is commanded to do

something it would normally avoid doing.

Major Psychometry (3rd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

The psychic can pick up images of what has been done with an object within the last 10 years or so. A very successful Charisma ST may probe back centuries, particularly if there is only one or two major events the object has participated in.

Mind Probe (5th Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

The psychic can, with a successful Charisma ST contest, go deep into a subject's memories, looking for a particular piece of information. If the Probe is more general, the most important buried memory (to the subject) pops up. If the subject does not have the memory needed, it brings up whatever it has that does have relevance.

Minor Psychometry (2nd Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

This power allows the psychic to get one impression from an object about its past, usually involving the most intense situation the object participated in. Given a choice, the impression concerns something of importance to the psychic.

Neutralize Molecules (4th Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: Touch

The psychic can change disease bacteria and viruses, and poison substances, to neutral substances that no longer hurt the target. Given a choice of more than one malady, the power goes to whatever is hurting the body of the target most, unless the psychic makes a medicine ST and direct the power to the most dangerous molecules, whether they are hurting the target at the moment or not.

Paralyze Foe (2nd Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: 30' (9m)

This power allows the psychic with a successful Charisma contest against the target's Constitution (assume a 12 CON unless the target is particularly sturdy) ST to cause his voluntary nervous system to freeze up. The target loses 5 points of Armor AC/AAC and gets followup CON ST rolls against the original attack roll only when it takes damage or after an hour, whichever comes first.

Photonic Field (3rd Level)

Duration: Until stopped by psychic

Range: 60' (18m)

The psychic creates a photonic TK field of intense light around a target (including the psychic) with a 60' radius that moves with target. The light is blindingly bright, protective goggles are needed.

Psionic Shock (3rd Level)

Duration: Instant

Range: 60' (18m)

This strikes an opposing brain with a Charisma ST contest. It does 3d6 non-lethal psychic damage.

Psi Blade (4th Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: touch

Psychic creates a TK Blade the size of a regular broadsword that ignores Damage Resistance, is +3 to hit Armor Class, and does 3d6 lethal psychic damage.

Read recent memory (2nd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 30' (9m)

With a successful Charisma ST, the psychic can read a recent memory of the target – something that happened in the last day or so. The memory has something to do with what the psychic wants to know, though not necessarily the exact information necessary. The psychic can prompt going to the right memory by verbally prompting the target.

Read Surface Thoughts (1st Level)

Duration: Instant until link broken

Range: 30' (9m)

With a successful Charisma ST, the psychic can read whatever the target is thinking at the moment. The target gets one Charisma ST contest per turn to break the link.

Remote Telekinesis (5th Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: Anywhere the psychic can see, including by Clairsentience and remote sensors.

With a successful Charisma ST, the psychic can move an object of 25 pounds (10 kg) per Psychic level at his normal movement rate for the duration of the power.

Revivify (5th Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: Touch

The psychic can bring someone back from the dead as long as the body is still intact and rot has not set in. The revived character must make a ST based on ½ his Intelligence or lose 1d6 Intelligence permanently. The psychic takes 3d6 non-lethal damage every time she attempts this power if the initial Charisma ST is successful.

Summon Lesser Minds (5th Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: 1 hour's travel for the Lesser Mind

The psychic can summon any creature of lesser Intelligence and Charisma

the psychic has touched psychically in the last week or so. The psychic can be specific or just summon all of them. They travel to join the psychic for an hour at their best speed. Creatures that come into the range during the hour also move toward the summoner. If they have not arrived by the end of the hour, the compulsion is over – some may be curious enough to continue, though they no longer know exactly where the summoner is. Their attitude toward the summoner depends on how they were previously treated.

Telekinesis (2nd Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 60' (18m)

The psychic can lift one or more objects with a total weight of not more than 1 kg per Psychic level. The object may be carried along with a modicum of concentration or directed to any point (traveling at walking speed) within the given range.

Telepathic Communication (4th Level)

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: 120' (36m)

The psychic can communicate with another person within the given range telepathically. Within the time limit, he can shift targets of the telepathy. A character who does not want to communicate this way can attempt a Charisma contest vs the psychic. The conversation is surface thoughts, as if talking, though the psychic can pick up slightly buried thoughts and emotions as well.

Translation (3rd Level)

Duration: 1 hour

Range: 60' (18m)

The psychic can interpret the thoughts behind words and give a good translation of an unknown tongue to her friends, either verbally or typing it out on a screen. She can also use the same semi-telepathy to translate her language to the other speaker, though problems with vocal chords and other speaking orifices still apply. However, an honest effort boosted by the psychic ability should give a reasonable message to the recipient.

Rules

Damage Resistance (DR)

This quality, which is shared by some races and quite a bit of equipment, is the ability of very hard or powerful forces to shrug off some damage, no matter how hard or easy it is to hit them. When a Combat Trooper, with an 8 AAC and 4 points of DR is hit by a gun doing 7 points of damage, the DR is subtracted from the 7 and only 3 points get through.

Armor Piercing

Some weapons and special effects can soar past the Damage Resistance effect. For instance, the Bug Armor Slicer weapon ignores points of Damage Resistance based on the number of dice of damage it does.

Encumbrance and Endurance

Encumbrance is a function of the mass of an object and its size and structure. Every character has an Encumbrance of his STR in Encumbrance Points of easy to use objects. Clodhoppers and Colonial Troopers can carry more than their Encumbrance in weight, but the objects must be packed on them and take at least a round to dig out if needed. Any objects that are modules in Trooper armor have no Encumbrance.

For the sake of simplicity, objects in this game that can be carried by a character have one of four Encumbrance rates. Add the rates of all the objects carried to determine the Encumbrance of the character.

Table 12: Encumbrance Table

Designation	Encumbrance Number
Heavy	7
Weighty	4
Light	1
Insignificant	0

If a character is over-encumbered, the number of points he has in excess of his Encumbrance limit is subtracted from all rolls made for the character. This is called an Endurance test, and a CON ST is necessary any time the character is called on for prolonged activity while carrying the full load. If failed, the character must rest rounds equal to the number failed by or collapse unconscious for the same period.

Experience

Experience points are how a character increase in ability and gains higher rank in his chosen class(es). They are gained in three ways.

A character gains experience equal to 100 x the HD of any hostile creature or enemy he participates in killing. He gets an equal amount if he renders the creature or enemy non-threatening permanently, by perhaps domestication or convincing the enemy to switch sides. Driving off or otherwise reducing the threat on a temporary basis is worth half the above amount. Every member of the party gets this award, though the GM may reduce the award if the challenge is obviously one-sided in favor of the characters. Challenges that are no challenge earn no experience points.

A character gets experience equal to the amount in credits the individual character gains in the course of his adventures. This can take the form of treasures found, money paid for the accomplishment of missions, or any other monetary gain earned during adventurous missions.

A character gets experience from accomplishing missions and making progress in the overall plot lines (whether or not there is combat involved or payment involved). These experience awards are entirely in the hands of the GM.

HIRELINGS AND SPECIALISTS

Characters often find it helpful to employ assistants (Hirelings) to help them on their adventures, or specialists to assist them with particular matters in between

adventures. The number of Hirelings a character may employ at any one time is based on the following chart:

Table 13: Charisma Bonus for Hirelings

Charisma	Hirelings	Loyalty
3	1	-3
4-5	2	-2
6-8	3	-1
9-12	4	0
13-15	5	+1
16-17	6	+2
18	7	+3

The Game Master can make a “loyalty check” based on the PC’s Charisma for an NPC put into a dangerous situation or one who is offered a bribe to change sides in a conflict.

Retainers may be exceptional NPCs with class levels, or may be “0 level” normal humans. Exceptional NPCs are usually generated just like player characters, whereas “0 level” retainers (such as porters, cooks, and soldiers) are assumed to have average ability scores, 1d6 hit points, and save as 1st level Mercenaries. Both leveled NPCs and “0” level Hirelings count against the limits in Table 14.

If the Game Master advises a player that individuals are available for hire, the player must negotiate a salary with each potential Hireling, and offer any equipment appropriate for the job. Once terms are met, the Game Master either judges acceptance of employment, or may roll on the following table, modified by the hiring character’s Charisma ST:

Table 14: Hireling Negotiation Result

ST Result	Result
5 or more under ST	Refusal, no re-negotiation
2-4 under ST	Refusal
ST -1, ST, ST+1	Further negotiation required
2-4 over ST	Offer accepted
5+ over ST	Accepted, high loyalty

Hirelings with classes gain experience along with their employer. Typically this is 20% of the player’s share, divided equally among all leveled hirelings. “0 level” hirelings do not ordinarily earn or accumulate experience.

Specialists

Specialists are generally hired to perform a specific, non-adventuring task, such as deciphering an ancient text or repairing a broken sensor array. Some common specialists and their rates are as follows:

Table 15: Specialist Wages

Specialist	Upkeep and Wages
Animal Handler	100Cr/month upkeep, 2,000Cr/month wages.
Assassin	10,000Cr/mission (more for prestigious/ dangerous targets).
Blacksmith	200Cr/month upkeep, 1000Cr/month wages
Chemist	50000Cr/month wages.
Cook (High Quality)	500Cr/month upkeep, 20,000Cr/month wages
Guard	100Cr/month upkeep, 200Cr/month wages.
Historian	400Cr/month upkeep, 5,000Cr/month wages.
Packbearer	10Cr/day upkeep, 25Cr/day wages.
Quartermaster	100Cr/month upkeep, 1000Cr/month wages.
Servant	100Cr/month upkeep, 100Cr/month wages.
Spaceman	100Cr/month upkeep, 2,000Cr/month
Spaceship Captain	500Cr/month upkeep, 25,000Cr/month wages.
Spaceship Engineer	500Cr/month upkeep, 15,000Cr/month wages.
Spaceship Pilot	10,000Cr/month wages
Spaceship Repairman/ Mechanic	5,000Cr/month wages
Spy	50,000Cr/mission.

Movement

Each race has a movement rate peculiar to it. Normal movement in a combat situation is based on this. Moving this rate or slower allows the character to take another action as part of the round. Zealots and Synthetics move at the rates of the race they came from/are based on.

Normal is based on a quick walk such as that used by a skirmish line.

Sprint is a quick dash and another action can be performed at -2 ability

All-Out Run is a full out run with no ability to perform another action. It normally applies to traveling more than one combat round at a run. See Full Turn for moving throughout just one turn. Note that Bugs do not have this ability, they cannot maintain a run for any length of time.

Full Turn under Notes is how far the character can move if he takes the entire turn with no other action. It applies to Normal and Sprint, only.

Table 16: Movement Distances

Race	Normal	Sprint	All Out Run	Notes
Human	60 ft (18 meters)	120 ft (36 meters)	180 ft (54 meters)	Full turn x2
Bug	50 ft (15 meters)	200 ft (60 meters)	N/A	Also on walls, Full Turn x2
Skinny	80 ft (24 meters)	150 ft (45 meters)	300 ft (90 meters)	Full turn x2
Clodhopper	100 ft (30 meters)	150 ft (45 meters)	600 ft (180 m)	Stops slowly in 50 ft increments, Full Turn x2

Time

Time is measured in three (3) time scales. The first scale is daily progress. It can be broken up into hours or days or any other normal demarcation and it is passed in narration, such as the GM saying “You make steady progress for the next three hours. There are no encounters of note.”

The second scale is the Turn. The turn is used for careful movement, searching, taking certain recoveries, and long term activities like repairing equipment that nonetheless take place in the field. A turn can be anything from a minute to ten minutes, at the GM’s discretion. This movement may take place on a location map, with a sudden dive into the third scale if Our Heroes run into hostiles.

The third scale is the combat round. This is approximately 10 seconds of time but can vary to as much as a minute under certain circumstances. It is approximately the time it takes to move a short distance (see Movement above) and accomplish a task. Actual combat can take place in split seconds, but this somewhat extended time scale allows for target acquisition, finding cover, and coming up with the brilliant maneuver it actually takes a player at least 10 minutes to figure out.

Natural Menaces

For the most part, having a character die because of a mischance fails the fun test for GM and player(s). If the characters are fighting flood or freezing or fire as well as hostiles, assign some difficulty numbers to accomplishing tasks, hinder everyone in small ways to remind them what they are in the middle of, and proceed with the struggle.

But sometimes there is a real need to face the characters with the perils of making a wrong decision or thinking they are invincible, and there is nothing like a natural disaster to bring these perils home.

In many cases, the best way to handle a days long struggle to stay alive in adverse circumstances can come down to one Saving Throw. But remember the basic rule. Be prepared for what happens if the characters fail the throw.

Suffocation

A character put into a suffocation situation, must make a Constitution Saving Throw after one round in the situation, and every round thereafter. Every round the Saving Throw is failed, the character takes 1d6 damage. When he runs out of hit points, he is unconscious and dies when his negative Hit Point damage equals his Constitution. A Clodhopper in this situation and not surprised by it makes the throw once every week.

Falling

A character falling in 1G of gravity in Earth-normal atmosphere takes 1d6 damage for every 10 feet (3 meters) he falls up to 150 ft. Thereafter he just takes 15d6 no matter how far he falls because sea level atmospheric pressure does not let him fall faster.

Conditions differ on planets with different gravity and atmosphere. Falling in no atmosphere means there is nothing to slow the plunge and d6s keep getting added no matter how far he falls. Planets with lesser or greater gravity change the interval at which d6s get added. For instance, on Earth's Moon, which has 1/6 Earth's gravity, add a d6 every 60 feet (18 meters). If a planet has 3 times Earth's Gravity, add a d6 every 3 feet (1 meter). Of course, such a planet might have a denser atmosphere, so the cut off for adding d6s might happen sooner, making for a smaller total damage from a long fall.

Freezing

Cold weather gear in Common Space is greatly advanced, and Arctic temperatures can be kept from affecting characters as long as they have the proper gear. Overwhelmingly cold areas are effectively instant death. If the GM determines the characters, no matter how protected, have only a small chance of surviving, just assign a number of dice of damage per turn or round.

Sunstroke

The opposite of freezing is handled in much the same way. Common Space hot weather gear is very effective, but if deprived of the gear Our Heroes may be facing rapid extinction.

Staying Afloat

Characters struggling to stay afloat can do so relatively easily on a calm day with a place of safety in easy range. In a high sea with no land in sight, it is best to resort to the one-Saving-Throw method.

Disease

Disease affects the Constitution of the character initially. A Constitution Saving Throw, sometimes with appropriate subtractions for virulence of the disease and lack or presence of modern medical equipment, establishes whether the disease has taken effect. If so, determine what Characteristic the disease attacks, and apply penalties to rolls using the Characteristic with increased difficulty on following days until a cure can be found. Then decrease the penalty at appropriate intervals until the character is back to normal.

Poison

Poison is another Constitution affecter, but in this case the damage goes directly to Hit Points. Poisons should have potency in number of d6s. If the Con roll is failed, the dice are rolled and the damage taken. At an appropriate time, which can be immediately or hours later, the Con roll is called for again. If failed, take

half the previous number of dice. Continue until the Con roll is made or there are no longer dice to roll, or the character has died.

Combat

Negotiation and Diplomacy

Some combats can be averted with a few well-chosen words (including lies). If the party is outmatched, or the potential opponents don't seem likely to be carrying much in the way of useful information, technology, or loot, the party can elect to brazen their way through in an attempt to avoid combat (or at least delay it until favorable conditions arise). See description of Charisma for negotiation system.

When Swords are Drawn

When the party of adventurers comes into contact with enemies, the order of events is as follows:

Determine Initiative

Party with Initiative acts first (casting spells, attacking, etc.) and results take effect.

Party that lost Initiative acts, and their results take effect.

The round is complete; keep turn order for the next round if the battle has not been resolved.

At the beginning of a combat round, each side rolls Initiative on a d6—high roll wins. The winning side acts first, moving, attacking, and casting spells. The other side takes damage and casualties, and then gets its turn.

Initiative rolls may result in a tie. When this happens, both sides are considered to be acting simultaneously. The Game Master may handle this situation in any way he chooses—with one caveat. The damage inflicted by combatants during simultaneous initiative is inflicted even if one of the combatants dies during the round. It is possible for two combatants to kill each other during a simultaneous initiative round.

If the combat involves more than about 10 beings on a side, break up each side of more-than-10 into groups of less than 10 by any criteria the players (including the GM) think is fair and/or interesting, and determine initiative for each group separately.

Example: An exploration party of six runs into a hostile rogue Bug patrol of 25 consisting of 3 Bug officers (3 HD Bugs) and 22 basic Bug Soldiers. The Gamemaster divides up the Bugs into 3 groups of 7 Bug Soldiers and 1 Officer, saying he will add the last Bug to whichever group moves second. The roll for the explorers is 4. The rolls for the Bugs are 4, 3, and 1. The Explorers and the 1st Bug group act simultaneously, then the other two Bug groups act, for as long as the combat continues.

The Attack Roll

To attack with a weapon, the player rolls a d20 and adds any bonuses to the result. These “to-hit” bonuses include the character’s Base Hit Bonus (BHB), the strength bonus for attacks with hand held weapons, the Dexterity bonus for attacks with ranged weapons, any bonuses for special weapons, and any other bonus identified as a “to-hit” bonus.

The attack roll is then compared to the target’s armor class to see if the attack hits, according to whichever system the Game Master has chosen to use.

The standard system (where a lower AC is better) is resolved by comparing the “to-hit” number to the number required on the standard “to-hit” table. If the attack roll is equal to or higher than the number on the table, the attack hits.

In the “Ascending” AAC system, if the attack roll is equal to or higher than the defender’s armor class, the attack hit.

Melee Attack

A melee attack is an attack with hand-held weapons such as a laser sword, spear, or vibro-dagger. A character’s strength bonuses to-hit and on damage are added to melee attacks. Two combatants within ten feet of each other are considered to be “in combat.”

Ranged Attack

Missile attacks are attacks with ranged weapons such as Auto Guns, Hellfire Rockets, Armor Slicer projectors, plasma guns, or more primitive weapons like gunpowder rifles, bows, slings, or thrown axes or javelins. A character’s dexterity bonus for missile attacks is added to the to-hit roll when the character is using missile weapons. When using missiles to attack into a melee, it is not possible to choose which opponent (or friend) receives the attack unless the attacker can roll his Dexterity ST. Otherwise, the Game Master determines who gets hit randomly, with weightings for position and other elements.

Table 17: Attack “to hit” Roll

Attack roll required to hit opponent’s standard armor class (AC) and ascending armor class (AAC)*

AC	+9	+8	+7	+6	+5	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	-9
[AAC]	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Required Roll	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

* This includes the BHB and other bonuses

Attack Rolls: 20’s and 1’s

A “natural” roll of 20 is an automatic hit and inflicts double damage if it would have hit normally. This is called a “critical hit.”

A natural roll of 1 is an automatic miss and may result in dropping a weapon or tripping. This is called a “Fumble.”

Invisible Opponent

An invisible opponent (either through chameleon gear or under cover of total darkness) can only be attacked if the general location is known, and the attack is at -4 to-hit. Note that more powerful enemies (those with sensitive smell or hearing, or more than six hit dice, or equipped with the proper sensor gear) are frequently able to detect invisible opponents; the Gamemaster should determine the chance of this according to the creature concerned and the situation. The penalty to hit can be reduced, or increased, in special circumstances.

Power Use

Mental power use and some weapon preparation begin at the start of the round. It is possible to use these powers or weapons within melee range of an opponent (10 ft or 3 meters), but if the user suffers damage while preparing, the power is aborted and the weapon preparation must begin again on the next round. Unless the effect description states otherwise, the effect happens in the caster’s initiative phase.

Movement and Combat

A character may move 10’ (3m) and perform any other action normally. Attempting to move any further distance and take any other action calls for a Skill Throw, with a Dexterity modification. Failure means the action does not take place. The character can be moved the full intended distance without taking an action or diverted as the character realizes he cannot complete his intended action.

Charging

A combatant can charge up to his full movement and make a melee attack. Damage is increased by 1, but the charging character has an AC or AAC effectiveness reduction of 2. If the target has a ranged weapon ready to shoot (having delayed his shot) he can shoot before the charge strikes.

Morale

Certain opponents, such as mind controlled, fanatic, or robotic creatures, are fearless and always fight to the death. The majority, however, do not continue to fight a hopeless battle, seeking to retreat, surrender or flee.

The Game Master decides when opponents abandon the battle and retreat, based on the situation and the opponent's intelligence.

Damage and Death

When a character (or creature) is hit, the amount of damage is deducted from his hit points. When hit points reach 0, the character is incapacitated and unable to fight or flee. A character reduced to negative hit points has its Constitution in turns before dying. Subtract the number of negative hit points from its Constitution before determining how many turns it has left before death.

Non Lethal Damage

Damage from fist, blunt objects, and some energy forms can be considered non-lethal. If a character reaches incapacitation from such attacks, they are simply unconscious for a number of combat rounds equal to the negative number. When their total reaches 1, the character can be called awake, or at least capable of making a Constitution roll to come awake. The GM can modify this rate of recovery to reflect special circumstances.

Combinations of lethal and non-lethal damage are treated as non-lethal for recovery purposes unless the lethal damage alone exceeds the characters hit points.

Healing

In addition to the various high-tech and psionic means of restoring hit points, a character recovers 1 hit point per day of uninterrupted rest. Four weeks of rest returns a character to full hit points regardless of how many hit points the character lost.

Binding Wounds

A character may bind 1d4 HP worth of wounds following a battle. This is particularly useful in low-tech campaigns or in adventures where none of the players has chosen to carry a med kit.

Note that the character can only recover hit points lost during this particular battle. Recovered hit points cannot exceed the uninjured maximum amount.

Combat Example

A Mercenary, Arnold Leon, is confronting three armed muggers in a dark alley of the Glittering City of Semoulia. We eavesdrop just as the encounter begins:

Arnold's player: "I draw myself up to full height and inform them that I'm a captain of the guard. My soldiers are right behind me, and these vermin better disperse or I'll have them brought in for interrogation."

Game Master: "Um, no. They're not buying it. You're covered in filth from that garbage pit, remember?"

Arnold's player: "Oh, yeah. I forgot that."

Game Master: "Roll initiative." (Secretly rolls a d6 and gets a result of 6.)

Arnold's player: "I rolled a 2."

Game Master: The gangboys attack first. They're all more than ten feet from you, and they move forward with their clubs at the ready."

Arnold's player: "They don't charge?"

Game Master: "Nope."

Arnold's player: "They don't get an attack because they closed in. It's my turn to attack, right?"

Game Master: "Yes."

Arnold: "I don't want to cause a ruckus, so I draw my vibrodagger and go for the first badguy."

Arnold's player rolls a d20.: "16...sweet! Adding my BHB and Strength Bonus gives me a total "to-hit" roll of 18!"

Game Master: (Notes that gangboys have an armor class of 14, using the ascending AC rules.) "You stab your vibrodagger into the leading gangboy. Roll for damage."

Arnold's player: (Rolls a d6.) "2 points, but I've got a +2 damage bonus, so that's 4."

Game Master: (That's enough to kill it. The gangboy had only 2 hit points.) "Okay, so as it's moving forward, the gangboy slips a little bit in a puddle on the stones of the narrow alley where you're fighting, and skids right onto your vibrating tooth of death. As you yank out the blade, the gangboy falls dead to the ground. The other two are still attacking, but they look nervous now—obviously starting to reconsider this whole thing."

Remember

Colonial Trooper is a free-form roleplaying game, meaning that there aren't very many rules. The Game Master is responsible for handling situations that aren't covered by the rules, making fair evaluations of what the characters do and deciding what happens as a result. This is not a game in which the players are "against" the Game Master, even though the Game

Master is responsible for creating tricky traps, dangerous situations, and running the Bug-Eyed Monsters and other foes the PCs encounter during the game. In fact, the players and the Game Master cooperate with each other to create a science fiction epic, with the Game Master creating the setting and the players developing the story of the heroes. If they aren't skillful and smart, the epic might be very short. But it's not the Game Master's job to defeat the players—it's his job to provide interesting (and dangerous) challenges, and then guide the story fairly.

Space Combat

Space combat can be very tense. Ships in orbit around planets intersect for seconds, pound each other with all the available weapons, and pass to build up tension again for the next pass. For the most part, ships in combat maneuver to set up a pass, then put all power to defenses and weapons, keeping back a bare minimum to power life support and repair. A ship trying to maintain full movement power in combat is gaining maneuver at the expense of hitting power.

Of course, a large Hole Ship fighting a small swarm of shuttles might very well maneuver constantly because it has a great advantage in power.

Starship Weapons

Starship weapons come in three sizes, Small, Medium, and Large. Various Space Navies argue the utility of a 25cm bore vs a 10" aperture, but for the purposes of this game, and for that matter the purposes of the Navies, all Large Weapons are essentially the same. They tend to be slower to fire but hit very hard. Only the largest Hole Ships carry them. Similarly, Medium size ships that might or might not be Hole Ships carry Medium Weapons that are equally catastrophic for an individual hit by one but make a smaller crater than a Large Weapon does. And small ships like Drop Ships and transports that need room for cargo (including people) rather than hardware, as well as land weapons and air fighters, carry Small Weapons that do about as much damage as the heaviest weapons carried by Troopers.

Missiles

Missiles give the biggest bang, carrying atomic warheads. These are "baby" nukes, but you still don't want to be anywhere within a 1000 yards of where one goes off. And yes, there are small, medium, and large "babies." The plasma rockets of the missiles keep firing and accelerating the missile for 100s of miles before running out of fuel. The area around a planet that has had a battle fought over it (literally) is dangerous for months until all the missiles that missed are accounted for. While missile guidance systems are very sophisticated, they are often spoofed. Missiles are generally used against "fixed" targets like planetary bases and orbital defense stations.

Mass Drivers

Magnetic Mass Drivers are similar in design to the Mag Rifles carried by the Troopers, but bigger. They fire small (relatively speaking) chunks of matter at speeds a significant fraction of the speed of light. In space, there is nothing but gravity wells to slow them down when fired. There is no explosive warhead, the impact of a kilogram of matter at that speed is quite enough.

Lasers

Lasers operate at light speed, and take the least amount of aiming computation except at extreme ranges. Since, unlike their more solid counterparts, lasers tend to dissipate with range, they are primarily a short range weapon, and often a large component of the point defense networks discussed below. There are very few ships armed with medium lasers. Big Hole Ships have the power to generate a Large Laser beam, small ships have power to push small lasers as a matter of necessity because they take up less room than missiles and mass drivers and their ammunition.

Plasma Torpedoes

This Skinny weapon was a surprise to both Bugs and Humans when they first ran into it, but now it is a part of every Space Navy. Essentially it creates a magnetic field that encases sun-hot plasma. The Infantry Plasma Guns are very small scale versions of this weapon – the magnetic field dissipates in atmosphere fairly quickly, making it a short range weapon. In space, the field might last forever, and while it has a slow movement, it expands as it moves, making it harder to dodge and easier to aim.

Starship Defense

The defensive force fields of old science fiction proved entirely impossible. The power drain is immense and the fields generated cannot contain the damage of atomic missiles and mass drivers and plasma torpedoes.

Something else was needed.

Starship Armor

The first choice was to coat space ships in such tough armor that offensive weapons cannot punch through. Early attempts created ships that could not move or maneuver without a prohibitive cost in fuel because of the mass of the armor. Fortunately, the creation of the St-O stardrive had a byproduct. By manipulating mini black holes in the manufacturing process, metal can be compressed to a state where the electrons are orbiting within the protons and neutrons and other strange items inside an atom. This generated material with a density of a neutron star. It is heavy but nowhere near as heavy as equivalent protective steel alloys.

Neutronium, as it was immediately called, is incredibly strong and does not let radiation through. Enough damage can break through, but generally the break is small and the neutronium does not crack and peel, keeping the damage localized.

And a properly equipped star dock can repair the holes in neutronium in hours, depending on how many there are.

Starship Sectioning

Because the Neutronium shielding localizes damage, starships are built like honeycombs. Every section is modular and can be fitted into more than one kind of ship, which streamlines production. A couple of small disasters proved the necessity for rigorous following of security protocols. It also means that a heavily damaged ship can break itself apart into Neutronium-shielded escape capsules, potentially saving everyone who is not in a breached section.

Point Defense

Besides the passive defense of armor and sectioning, combat starships and other ships that might find themselves in danger zones maintain extensive suites of lasers and countermissiles meant to stop damage before it arrives.

Electronic Spoofing

The active defenses of a ship also include electronic counter measures (ECM) set to spoof incoming missiles and even fool long range detection gear into estimating incorrect ranges and even directions. Sophisticated missiles have electronic counter counter measures (ECCM) suites, and sophisticated ships have counter spoofs for those.

Shear Shields

While static force fields proved too power hungry to be usable, Human experience with Bug Armor Slicers gave them a concept for Deflectors that can be used actively against attacking weapons to intercept and deflect them away from their target.

Running a Space Combat

The point of this game is adventures on strange planets. However, Our Heroes could find themselves involved in a space combat. The GM could assign the players Spacer NPC positions to play in the ship while their characters are hoping not to get blasted into many madly spinning escape capsules in interplanetary space. Or the characters themselves can get involved in the combat.

There are several roles for characters in a space combat.

Command

Diplomats and others in positions of command might find themselves in charge of a spaceship. To them falls the usual command decisions. What targets do you engage? Where do you send repair crews first? Is it time to bug out? Is there a satellite or planetoid or comet to use for cover? This is primarily a conversation between GM and Captain and Captain and crew, with perhaps some Charisma rolls necessary in case some of the crew is feeling mutinous.

Weapons Command

The Offensive weaponry of the ship might be controlled by one person or divided up between two or three. Mercenaries, who have generally good BHB, and Agents, who can make use of their Backstab ability in this case, are best assigned this task. Troopers can also do this, especially if the ship's combat programming is configured to accept their Aiming reticules as targeting aides.

Defense

The active Defenses of a ship are best commanded by Hunters, whose wisdom allows them to see the threats and move to counter them. They can use their Wisdom Attributes as Combat modifiers to stopping incoming missiles and mass driver bursts.

Maneuver

Of course, Pilots are in their element maneuvering the ship and trying to gain advantage over the other pilots. If the ship already has pilots, character Pilots can also lend their ranged weapon BHBs to Weapons.

Damage Control

Troopers in their suits are ideal damage control leaders because they can enter areas of the ship exposed to space and fend off incidental damage from power wires flying around, and radiation exposure.

General Notes

Normal beings cannot possibly keep track of a space battle full of missiles, magnetic driven missiles, and laser beams. Fortunately, Common Space space combatants can plug into the combat computers and their senses and skills are immediately translated into modules the spaceship weapon arrays can use.

We are keeping actual numbers out of this discussion because a space combat, while exciting, has entirely too many opportunities for our ground-pounding heroes to suddenly be breathing vacuum and hoping for pickup. Keep the combat somewhat abstract and try to make the ship take damage where Our Heroes are not. Get them to their destination planet, or make them land on a refuge planet, or scoop them out of the wreckage of their ship and into the winning vessel, and let them get back to the one on one adventures they signed up for.

Campaign and Adventure Design

A big part of the fun of running a planetary exploration campaign is all the creative design work you get to do. Creation is a fundamentally rewarding experience, and this genre gives you a lot of room to explore your inspirations and wildest ideas. Hardly anything is too crazy or too fantastic. Want a dried-out basin filled with mile-high quartz crystal, infested with giant, flying centipedes? Put it in there; it's definitely not to off-the-wall for a world orbiting an alien sun.

Tone

One thing to always keep in mind when designing a campaign, is the sense of strange wonder implicit in science fiction. Seas brim with strange denizens, deserted or ravaged cities are everywhere where the Wars have gone through. Once-proud, technologically advanced planetary empires or mysterious colonies now lay obscured beneath choking, unnatural foliage, their great engines and scientific marvels perhaps still sleeping under a layer of verdigris waiting for some unscrupulous Hunter to stir them to life again.

The remnants of star spanning civilizations huddle in fortified edifices to protect themselves against the deprivations of the hordes and horrors of the wastelands. Law is essential, lest scarce resources be squandered, jeopardizing everyone's survival. Every man, and often every woman, receives martial training at an early age; there is no room for the protected, only the protectors.

In a sense, the typical Space Wars recovery setting can be considered "post-apocalyptic." The survivors are struggling to regain their place in the universe and strange remnants of precursor civilizations are stirring and dreaming of ancient glory.

What you, as Game Master, can offer your players is a chance to restore a small bit of that glory. As they gain experience and wealth, often in the most gritty and mercenary of pursuits, you can put greater and greater challenges in their path. At the height of their power, they should become a source of light that may bring back interstellar glory and comity to all.

Scope

Unlike traditional fantasy RPG campaigns, which typically start in a small locale and build out from there, science fiction campaigns typically deal with entire worlds and systems of worlds. This does not mean it is necessary to spend months detailing every nook and cranny of Omigosh IV, however. Brainstorm a campaign “cheat sheet” outlining the highlights of the campaign, and then flesh these out as needed. Some of these elements could include:

Cities/Settlements

Even if your player characters have crash-landed into the middle of a wasteland, it is likely that it won't be long before they come across their first settlement. A quick list of the major cities in the area, along with some brief descriptive text for each, helps you Game Master them on the fly without risking them becoming “generic”. Something like this: Hashruz – known as the “City of Crystal Spires”- ruled by the Nest Lord Supranus, mostly Skinny population, street duels common, soldiers wear bright red with banthe-fur cloaks, population enjoys strong wine, epic poetry, and public torture of war prisoners. Keep it short and sweet, so you don't get locked into anything permanent, and don't waste time on things the players will never experience or encounter.

NPCs

Each settlement should have some important non-player characters. List a few you think the players might encounter, or who might seek out the player characters for hire, and don't waste time on the others. Again, just a quick descriptor is all you need. Something like this: Supranus (M6) – Nest Lord of Hashruz, tall and thin, even for a Skinny, Zealot, cruel, wants to conquer Fribort (neighboring city); Lanashry (H2) – Princess, daughter of Supranus, very beautiful for a Skinny, hates father, wants to flee Hashruz; Exculporr (A5) – Chief advisor of Supranus, human, obese, conniving, facial tic, looking for scapegoats to take the blame for his treasonous commerce with Fribort on. And so on. Half a dozen is usually fine.

The Surrounding Lands

A city doesn't typically exist on a flat, white plain (unless it's the Scorching Sodium Plain of Shadaboom). Be sure to know a few of the major geographical features around the city. This is also helpful when it's time for an NPC to tell the characters how to get to the Lair of the Dragon Lords: “Travel through the Fungal Mazes to the River of Ancient Battles, sail south along it until you come to the Opal Wastes, and then seek the rock spire known as the Dragon's Sword. Beneath it lies the Lair of the Dragon Lords.”

Altogether, this should fit on a single page of 8-12 point script for each major settlement or plot event point, and always be at hand. As needed, flesh out further details at your leisure or while the players are making their mid-game pizza run.

Mapping

It is also a good idea to sketch out a rough map of each world. Mark out the major cities and geographical features, and even some political boundaries, so you know roughly where players might encounter patrols. Keep it very rough, and vague, in pencil. Nothing is permanent until your players' characters actually get there.

Give your players a blank sheet of hex paper, let them know where home base is, and let them take it from there. I know it goes against conventional gaming wisdom, but detailed maps of your campaign world should really be your players' job. The minute you mark that great adventure location on a map, you have wasted all your time when the players wander off in a different direction. Just hold off on the location, bide your time, and plop it down in front of them, wherever they might have been headed.

Plotting out adventure locations on graph paper ahead of time is fine, but you can just as easily go online and find literally thousands of available maps and random map generators if you don't have a lot of time, and focus your creative energies on filling those maps instead.

Episodic Play vs Plot Based Campaign

While it is certainly an option to run extensive dungeons or "adventure paths" with Colonial Troopers, if you have read a lot of 40s and 50s science fiction, you have noticed that most stories are very episodic in nature. Keep your adventures short and sweet, and you capture that "pulp" feel. A good science fiction adventure should take at most a session or two, before the characters are plunged right into the next one. Keep the pace fast and loose, and keep a close eye on your players' attention level. If they are engaged and interested, you are doing it right. If they are yawning or flipping through back issues of *Space Gamer*, it is time to have a swarm of white Azogs chase them out of that boring ruined city and into the next adventure.

The Wilderness

The landscape of a new world is just as much of a character as your NPCs. Give each region personality. Give your players a reason to sightsee, and a reason to be scared. Assign each region a "look", an iconic monster or two, a patrol from another nation, some local savages, a couple of landmarks, and anything else you think might distinguish the area, so they don't begin to bleed into one another. Don't forget things like weather, sounds, and smells. Something like this: The Dread Wastes of Merl – Puce badlands dotted with bubbling pits of verdant tar; prowling Ertlkigs (a predator), herds of Sobrets (a grazer); mounted patrols from Fribort, airship patrols from Hashruz; Slorks (a tribe of large, green, Angry Natives) scavenge here, 500' high obsidian formation called the "Shadow Pyramid", large lake of verdant tar called "the Sleeping Sea", scorching heat at day, black snow at night, constant bubbling/sighing sound and sickly sweet smell from tar pits.

Taking a little time to flesh out a region makes it resonate with your players. But don't make it too detailed – it takes too much time, and doesn't allow your players to fill in the blanks with their imaginations.

Keep in mind the challenges the players must face as they travel. Reward preparedness, and don't be afraid to punish haphazardness. If your players take the time to buy provisions, be sure to keep track of it. Work it into the adventure if you can (spoilage, insects, etc.) to add to the tension level. If your players are engaged enough in your game to do all this shopping, and you don't give them an opportunity to use any of it, they are going to quickly lose interest in this potentially rewarding aspect of the game. Take a look at your players'

equipment purchases before an expedition, jot down a few interesting things on your notepad, and work that stuff into the adventure. Give them a lake to cross with the raft they bought, a cliff to climb with that rope, and a cold night to use all those blankets.

Encourage them to map as they go, and let the hirelings get up to no good once in awhile. Change the weather every so often, and have a herd of something big cross their path. Things like these ensure your players enjoy (and fear) their journeys as much as their destinations.

The Underworld

Fantasy RPG players expect to go underground, and with at least two major races that spend a lot of time underground, and with all the bomb shelter complexes created during the Space Wars, there is a lot of underworld for our explorers to delve into.

Colonial Troopers has six modifiers for saving throws – Be sure to include a challenge for each of them when designing your underworld. Take a look at the equipment and special abilities on the players' character sheets – and be sure to include challenges involving these as well. Include a challenge for each of the skills known. After you're done with that, you have practically written the entire adventure, and you have yet to select a single BEM!

The Underworld of the science fiction genre is at times vast and awe-inspiring, and claustrophobic and constraining at others. Keep your Underworld environments three-dimensional and use an assortment of large and small spaces to avoid a sense of repetition. As always with science fiction adventure, the scenery, the "weirdness" of it all, is just as important as the adventure itself. The science fiction Underworld is filled with vast caverns, lost seas, dark rivers, winding passages, flooded tubes, dangerous hives, and secret laboratories.

Take time into consideration as well. Give the players a reason to keep moving along, such as rescuing a princess before she is sacrificed to the goddess of the Freeborn, or wrecking the insane scientist's apparatus before it can cripple the atmosphere purification factory.

Creatures

The number of creatures described herein cannot hope to match the variety in hostility and danger found on the many worlds of Common Space. Here you can find some common sorts of creatures that are found in one form or another on many worlds. The descriptions may differ from world to world, but their game effects are much the same. The following terms are used to describe the creatures in game terms.

AC – This is Armor Class, expressed as both the descending scale of the original fantasy rules and [in brackets] in Ascending (AAC) form.

HD – This is Hit Dice. Unless shown differently in a specific description, these are in d6. The numbers correspond to the creature's BHB, as well. Many are shown with an addition, such as 6+6. The second number indicates that the creature is very tough and has a high CON. The Game Master would roll 6d6, getting something like 22, and then add 6 to get a final Hit Point total of 28. This

represents the adder its high CON would have. It also indicates that any CON-based saves the monster has to make should have a +1 addition.

Atk – This is Attacks, and is a short description of the number of attacks and what they are. For instance, the BEM is described as having four tentacles and a bite. This is the maximum number of attacks the creature can make in one combat round, and the Game Master determines whether they are all applied to one target or spread around, and whether anyone is actually in range for a bite.

Dmg – This is Damage, and describes how many dice are rolled for each attack the creature succeeds with

Save – This describes what ST the Creature uses, both for Saving Throws and for Skill Throws if the GM wants to have the Monster climb or jump or do something equally exciting with a chance of failure. For the most part Monsters succeed in what they try. That's why they are Monsters. Mostly, Creatures use Mercenary Saving Throws.

Move: This is how far the creature can move and still do something else. Usual rules for Sprinting and Extended Running apply.

If the GM has need for more exotic monsters than are here provided, creatures from the original rules can be adapted. Indeed, some of the classic exotic monsters in the original rules were taken from classic science fiction. The ubiquitous Displacer Beast is one example that comes immediately to mind. Alternately, **Warriors of the Red Planet**, the Sword and Planet rule set that is a sister to this book, has an extensive bestiary of alien creatures that would be at home on the worlds of Common Space.

Amoeboids

AC: 1 [19]

HD: 4+8

Atk: pseudopod

Dmg: 1d6 plus Acid value 6

Save: M4

Move: 60"

These unicellular creatures would be a simple curiosity except they appear on many different planets throughout Common Space. They seem to have an organized society, but the other star nations have been unable to make any real contact. Some theorize that they are the remnants of the Eradicators, the star-spanning race responsible for the Bare Worlds and other devastated worlds. They attack any intelligent tool-using creatures they meet, so they certainly have the attitude.

Angry Natives

AC: 7 [13]

HD: 2+2

Atk: Shiv or Pandibat or Crossbow

Dmg: weapon type +1 for strength

Save: M2

Move: 60"

These are the intelligent but primitive (non-technological) inhabitants of worlds who are mad at the characters. They are physically similar to humans

and may have armor and sophisticated hand weapons and missile weapons. They mostly attack in mobs, but might attempt to singly sneak up on an explorer and do him or her a mischief. Not to be taken lightly.

Apex Predators

AC: 4 [16]

HD: 7+7

Atk: bite and 2 claws

Dmg: 2d8, and 1d6 each

Save: F7

Move: 180'

The apex predator of many planets, generally resembling in some fashion a great cat, though it might be reptilian, or insectoid. Groups of them herd potential prey with their fearsome roars (under 4HP must save or flee for 1 turn) or other tactics. When fighting, two successful claws attacks allow them to rake their prey with their remaining claws automatically for an additional 4d6 points of damage. A Predator hide is generally among the most coveted ornaments a local native can possess.

Bug-Eyed Monsters (BEMs)

AC: 3 [17]

HD: 10+30

Atk: 4 tentacles, 1 bite [varies]

Dmg: 1d6 & grip, 2d8 [varies]

Save: M10

Move: Slither 50"

A general appellation to all large and hungry alien monsters, particularly those about whom the speaker knows absolutely nothing. It is used casually when talking about barely known or rumored creatures, but is an ethnic insult if applied to the known races of Common Space. The Bugs take great delight in using it because while they have many eyes (number varies on specific bug classes), they are not, in fact, faceted.

Bugs

AC: 6 [14]

HD: 3

Atk: +3

Dmg: d4 w/mandibles, 2d12 AP Armor Slicer

Save: M3

Move: 50 ft

During the war, many bug hives were broken away from the central Queen Council and were forced to develop independently of their fellows. Some of these "hives" were actually occupation forces for planets that were blasted out of the war. An adventuring party, no matter what its composition, has to treat every such contact as a new situation, as some of these hives have developed extremely disconnected views of the worlds and their place in them. These can range from hold out units that want to keep fighting, to psychotic hives that think they are the last remnant of Bug culture, to peaceful agrarian colonies who have driven all knowledge of the war, including its final denouement, out of their Brains and have developed their own perverse (by Bug and possibly human standards) culture.

The Bugs described above are Soldier Bugs. No other caste is capable of combat.

Freeborn

AC: 2 [18]

HD: 3+3

Atk: by weapon type

Dmg: by weapon type

Save: M3

Move: 60'

The Freeborn consider themselves outside the rules of society, responsible only to their own consciences and the logic of the moment. Everyone else calls them pirates. Pirate leaders tend to have 6 hit dice and other stats like 6th level Mercenaries. Pirates of other Classes do exist, including some Troopers of about 5th level who act as bodyguards. Some of the latter are deserters, the others are discharged members of the military who found a cushy posting.

Even before humans entered interstellar space, some Bug Hives had decided that the Hive Council was not acting in accordance with the needs and aspirations of their particular hives, so they opted to pile into a Hole Ship and find another way to satisfy their fate. Some, of course, established colonies outside the accepted boundaries of Bug Space. Others, however, decided that it would be a lot easier to plunder other ships of other races, and other Hives, and live the jolly freebooter life.

Irresponsible Humans and Skinnies coming into interstellar space picked up on this concept and were soon adding their own twists on the process. Soon there was an entire volume of space known as Freeborn Space. It is suspected that some of the Freeborn captains are Xenophorms. If so they are maintaining their cover as pirates of the other races. Some worlds devastated during the recent wars were ravaged by the Freeborn, not one of the belligerents.

After the war was over, some military leaders of all three Allies suggested that the immense navy developed for the war be used to clean out Freeborn space, but war weariness was too heavy for the populations of the worlds, governments wanted to stop paying for immense fleets, and the momentum was lost.

The Freeborn fleets as a whole are quite powerful -- enough to keep the United Planets, Bugs, or Skinnies from conquering Freeborn Space.

Example Freeborn World: Grisette

The Freeborn Stars are the region of space immediately coreward of the United Planets. It is a lawless zone of pirates, mercenaries, and other societies which reject central authority.

The most notable planet is Grisette, about 400 light-years corewards from Earth.

The planet circles an ordinary yellow-white star, in a system with several other resource-rich but airless worlds. 4000 kilometers in diameter, Grisette has a surface gravity of 0.45 G. The weather is temperate, the local ecology

compatible with human and Skinny biology.

Small polar ice caps exist, and three large islands or small continents (each less than 1000 kilometers across); otherwise, the land area is made up from hundreds of mountainous islands (1 to 100 kilometers across). There is no important native life on Grisette, but the land and seas are thick with a wide variety of imported plants and animals.

Each of the three large islands has a city; the northernmost, Chunn Dasch, also boasts a modern spaceport with ship construction facilities. Some orbital defense platforms exist, along with the remains of an orbital elevator (destroyed a few decades ago).

Four factions control Grisette:

The Negrantine, an independent Skinny Nest, is the most prosperous and numerous of Grisette's factions. They operate many agricultural estates on islands scattered about the planet. Negrantine citizens like to believe their people don't become pirates, mercenaries, and so forth. Their religious beliefs center around reincarnation and identifying their ancestors in their current incarnations. The largest island in the southern hemisphere, Quom Central, is almost entirely inhabited by the Negrantine. There are nearly a million Negrantine on the planet.

A Negrantine city, Ordbrett, built on the northern ice cap, holds the second faction controlling Grisette. It is a different power group from the normal sort of Negrantines. Captives awaiting ransom, hostages, kidnapping victims and others live here under strange, stringent rules set by a sub-Nest rebellious cell of the Negrantine -- the Order of Hosts. Depending on how rich the victim is, or how much ransom is expected, living conditions can range from prison-like to tolerably interesting. The Hosts use everything from chains to high-tech scanning equipment to prevent escapes and rescues. The city has quite impressive -- and probably effective -- defenses to prevent spacecraft (or submarines) from approaching without permission. Tens of thousands of Hosts and Guests reside in Ordbrett. The pirates, kidnapers, hostage-takers, etc. are referred to as Patrons or Clients; the persons wishing to release or recover captives, as the Redeemers.

NOTE: the orthodox Negrantine which are found elsewhere on Grisette are none-too-pleased with the Order of Hosts. While they are of the same Skinny Nest stock, the two groups don't get along well -- the orthodox Negrantine deplore kidnapping, for one thing.

The third faction is Frelltek, a human stock company with branches both in Freeborn space and Common Space. It employs thousands of persons in the spaceport and other high-tech industries of Grisette. In Freeborn space the company must of course enforce its own contracts and defend its own factories, housing, etc. By contrast with the usual pirates of the Freeborn Stars region, employees of Frelltek seem quaintly suburban. Most of Frelltek's activities are in Chunn Dasch, which it effectively controls. Probably a hundred thousand Frelltek employees and their families work within the Grisette system.

The actual Freeborn are an entirely informal, loose association of pirates,

rouges, thieves and mercenaries; their leader(s) change fairly often, based on fortune, treachery, skill and cunning. Most of the planet's islands that are not Negrantine estates are the personal fiefs of Freeborn chieftains. No Freeborn captain or clan has enough power to impose their will on the other Freeborns as a whole; but the current Captain of Captains has much to say about how the planet is run. The Captain of Captains has a nominal "palace" in equatorial orbit, in what was formerly the station atop the planet's orbital elevator.

Think of the Freeborn-controlled islands here as being "drug lord mansions" - extravagantly (if not always effectively) well-defended, with lavish and tasteless architecture; or in many cases, less pleasant, and inhabited by criminals scheming to obtain and maintain an extravagant, tasteless island of their own. A particular island-controlling Freeborn group might have 100 to 1000 persons residing on their island. There are even a few Bug Freeborn establishments.

Attacks by Freeborns on each others' ships, islands, crews, etc. are quite common; the planet has even seen a couple of nuclear weapons used in the last few decades.

The Negrantine people, and employees of Frelltek, are in theory off-limits to Freeborn attacks; but there are Freeborns who respect nothing and nobody, not even the laws of their lawless society. The Captain of Captains often has to negotiate with, and arrange compensation for, the Negrantine and Frelltek.

Mines and other operations to extract resources from the other planets of the system are mostly run by Frelltek.

Gangboys

AC: 7 [13]

HD: 1d6

Atk: Knife

Dmg: 1d6

Save: M1

Move: 60'

This is a general term for the civilian criminal elements that can be found on both the civilized streets of the home worlds and among the ruins in devastated worlds, not to mention the frontier towns where adventuring companies get together and get supplied for the next expedition. Generally no one gangboy is dangerous to a fully equipped adventurer, but they tend to run in packs and sometimes are willing to take some casualties if the prize looks to be worth the effort.

Occasional gangs are led by higher level muscle, even perhaps a Trooper or psionic, as a surprise for adventurers who think they don't have to worry about some street punks.

Oort Whales

AC: 5 [15]

HD: 25 +25

Atk: Tail slap and bite

Dmg: Slap does only 4d6 because the surroundings are 0G The bite can swallow

a being on a small vehicle and grind both for 6d6 a round.

Save: M10

Move: 250', 75 m

These creatures are similar to Earthly whales only in shape, and their hindquarters are more snakelike. They thrive in the gas clouds and dust belts of forming systems, or older systems that still have large regions of gas and dust. They travel by generating Worm Holes and essentially using an organic version of the Stanhope-Obegwa drive.

The first of these seen by human spacefarers appeared in the Terran asteroid belt, sucked up some of the smaller rocks and dust pockets, and disappeared. Terran scientists began to speculate on just what the creatures could do. Then the second one showed up.

This one was badly damaged by obvious weapons fire. It died. Probing its body provided Stanhope and Obegwa with the hints they needed to create the star drive that bears their name. The discovery of Oort Gas within the body helped create the first True Pilots who took mankind to the stars.

Despite their very sturdy structure and whale-like appearance, these creatures are essentially silicon-based and have very little in common with carbon-based life. Human authorities have ruled that they officially have the intelligence of an Atlantic seal. They are hunted for their Gas and a few ingredients of limited utility. Hole Drives can be manufactured, and only True Pilots have a use for the Gas. Zealots are the most dedicated Oort Whale hunters. While automated Whale Hunters can safely search out and render the creatures, the Zealots insist on putting their lives on the line by hunting the creatures in one-man drop ships. About 35% of the time, Hunters do not come back.

All star traveling races in Common Space have their stories about how they found the secrets of the Oort Whales. The Clodhopper tales tend to contradict one another and the tellers seem to be taking a certain delight in their fabrications.

Predator Packs

AC: 5 [15]

HD: 5+10

Atk: Bites from many members, knock over

Dmg: 5d6 (each d6 is one bite, DR works against each bite)

Save: M5

Move: 150"

These predators work in packs, like Earthly wolves and are about the same size as a wolf. They can be mammal, avian, reptile, mobile plant, insectoid, or something entirely different. They gang up on a target, trying to knock it down and then go for the tender bits. Targets must make a Strength ST vs a ST +2 of the pack to avoid being knocked down. If the Hit Points of the Pack are exhausted, the pack breaks off and runs away.

Swarms

AC: 5 [15]

HD: 8

Atk: Multitude of bites

Dmg: 1d12 (each point is one bite)

Save: A8

Move: varies

Swarms are clouds of insects, small reptiles or mammal, or even heat-seeking plant spores. An unaware target is suddenly surrounded by the swarm. Ranged weapons are essentially useless, though explosions affect members of the swarm. Individual hand to hand attacks kill individual creatures, each hit point is one creature. Melee weapons do only 1 point per attack unless the player describes a method of use that the GM deems effective for killing more than one at a time. When all of the hit points are destroyed, the creatures give up the struggle and depart. They are not destroyed.

Xenophorms

AC: 0 [20]

HD: 5d8 +5

Atk: Almost any natural weapon, or tech weapon

Dmg: varies

Save: H5

Move: varies

Xenophorms are shape-shifting creatures who seem to have originally had a basically humanoid shape. At this point in their development, Xenophorm children look like the children of whatever race they are near and slowly learn to switch to other shapes. Even X-rays and CAT scans cannot tell natural from Xenophorm, and even the trained senses of True Pilots and other Zealots cannot detect the difference with normal senses. However, all Xenophorms have certain body secretions and exudations that tell the ultrasensitive sensors of synthetics that they are seeing a Xenophorm, not a natural being.

Xenophorms seem to have no real creativity, but they are expert copiers. When originally contacted they were jungle primitives, barely neolithic in technology. In a little over a century they were challenging humanity for possession of human space.

Now, any Xenophorm or Xenophorm group contacted is essentially a new entity. The main racial trait that seems to run throughout their culture is the lust for having it all, especially that possessed by non-shapeshifters, who obviously don't deserve to have it.

Inevitably, some players are going to want to play Xenophorms as characters. Unless you want the tension of a player trying to deceive the other players, the best way to handle this is to treat the PC as an orphan raised by some other race. As a first level character, the PC has whatever class he wants, and can shift to one other shape. As he gains in level, the character can assume a new shape with a new level. At assuming 7th level of his chosen class, if the character has not run off to join some group of rogue Xenophorms, the player must choose to just continue the character as a Xenophorm, adding levels and shapes with a Mercenary's progression and continuing to operate as his chosen class at 6th level, or continue with his normal class, keeping the shapes he has taken up to this point but not adding any more.

Worlds

There are many kinds of worlds in Common Space. All of the races of Common

Space like the same sort of worlds, planets orbiting in the “Sweet Zone” where the system sun presents just enough heat, water is mostly liquid, and life as they know it is comfortable, or can be made so.

In addition to those worlds, there are worlds too close to their stars or too far and /or too large or too small; seldom visited except for special requirements such as mining a gas giant’s atmosphere or seeking out an exotic mineral only found in such places. Some of these worlds may support life, even intelligent life, but there is no contact with them. Is there an entire civilization of star faring methane breathers who love sub-zero temperatures and 10gs of weight? If so, they have nothing to do with the races presented herein and they mind their own business. In other words, if there are such races, it is up to the local Game Master to provide them.

Of the worlds of Common Space of interest in this game, they come in several categories.

Precursor Worlds

Some of each of the types of worlds described below have a feature found throughout Common Space. Humans and Bugs and Skinnies were not the first star-faring civilizations, or major planetary civilizations, in this section of space. Ruins of previous civilizations can be found everywhere, including on the Bug home world. Not just one civilization or even two warring civilizations, though the remnants of two such races are present. Remnants of at least five civilizations, ranging in era from 3 billion Terran years ago to a few thousand years have been found. So far very little more than the remnants of vitrified buildings and some enigmatic space constructions are known to have been found. If something more significant has been dug up, the diggers, whether governments, corporations, or academics, are keeping them close to the vest.

Some of the worlds in this category have remnant populations of sapient creatures who may be some form of the formerly star-faring peoples. Most are primitive and very wary of people of any description who land in spaceships.

Bare Worlds

Many worlds in common space are worlds bare of any indication of life. They have oxygen atmospheres and seas of salt water and rivers of pure water, but not a amoeba squirms around. On some of these worlds ruins of previous civilizations extend over the stone and sand and there are craters and other signs of struggle.

The common theory is that these worlds were blasted into lifelessness by interstellar war. Just what kind of weapon can strip a world of every trace of life is unknown, and it is hoped that some race with that knowledge does not still lurk among the stars ready to use it again.

Most of these worlds seem to have been cleared recently. The accepted designation for that race is the Eradicators, since their motivation seems to have been simply a wish to be alone as the only sapient race in the universe. Unless they come from somewhere very far away, they don’t seem to have survived any better than their many victims.

Closed Worlds

Some worlds are closed to everyday contact with star travelers.

Autonomous satellites or manned space stations are placed in the system and any unauthorized spacecraft coming out of a Hole in the System is bombarded with messages telling them to leave, immediately. If the ship does not leave, autonomous satellites open fire with atomic missiles. Station personnel may wait to hear any excuse the traveler might have, but are authorized to use every weapon in their inventory to eradicate any intruder.

One of these Closed Worlds is Moklin, a fruitful and verdant planet that has suffered many space bombardments in recent history. It is the home planet of the Xenophorms, and all the races that fought the Xenophorms cooperate in a constant patrol of the system to keep any remnants of that race from getting access to space again.

Another world is Hroshii, the presumed home planet of the Clodhoppers. The closed status is imposed by the Clodhoppers themselves and certain vessels can orbit the world, though they are closely watched by the Clodhopper Space Guard. While the Clodhoppers have not demonstrated a technology particularly superior to that of the other main races, they are still a relatively unknown and close-mouthed race and seem to want to keep things that way.

Other planets are closed because of diseases as yet unconquered, excessive radiation from previous bombardments, or resident races that may be close to sapience. After much negotiation, the three main powers came to an agreement that planets with developing sapients should be left to develop before any contact is made. They are closely observed by automated satellites. After the experience with the Xenophorms, primitives are to be left alone until they develop some sort of technology of their own and the proclivities of whatever civilization they develop can be observed.

And some planets are closed because ships landed on them and never came back. In theory these are temporary closures until the mystery is solved, but there are many worlds and it is easy to overlook systems for many years. Often adventuring groups are chartered to explore such systems.

Example Closed World Proxima Centauri II

Unlike most of the planet systems described herein, this one bears its Terran designation rather than the locally determined one.

This planet had a technological civilization sometime before humans first built brick cities. They were extremely xenophobic, and mostly kept to themselves. About the same time humans were fighting wars with black powder, factions on the planet resorted to atomic weaponry to settle a difference. They did not manage to destroy their world, but they dealt it a deadly blow. Century after century less and less of the planet was habitable.

Rather than inspiring the population to unite in a world-saving effort (which was entirely possible with their level of technology) the constant decline of the planet just encouraged the factions to settle into secluded and sealed city states and shun contact with even their neighbors. But even

this isolationist policy still led to wars as the city states quarreled over the constantly shrinking resources.

Finally, about twenty years before the Terrans derived the Hole drive from the dead carcass of a Oort Whale, the final war destroyed the last few city states. The planet is now restricted by reason of radiation hazards. Occasional scouting trips have not found any survivors. There are still many automated weapons roving the planet or defending now-empty strongholds. Their intelligence level is not sufficient to incite Synthetic interest in them.

Colonies

Colonies are worlds that one or more of the races of Common Space have colonized for various reasons. In general they are partially civilized, with at least one major city and a space elevator. Sometimes they are precursor worlds, though generally such worlds with remnant populations are avoided. For the most part these worlds survived the Wars untouched. Those belonging to the United Planets have voting delegates to the UP Assembly.

Under the treaties concerning such worlds agreed to by the dominant races of Common Space, a colony must have an operating economy and a full presence on the world to be recognized as a Colony World. Otherwise it is an Open World, see below.

Example Bug Colony World: Igrakon

Circling a bright blue sun is the Bug world of Igrakon.

The system has dozens of small planets and asteroids; Igrakon is the largest, but still only 4800 kilometers in diameter, with a surface gravity of 0.25 G. There is only a trace atmosphere of noble gases on the surface, which is roasting at hundreds of degrees Centigrade during the day. The period of rotation is 22 hours.

Tens of millions of Bugs labor here, organized into about a dozen Hives, in deep mines and underground cities. They extract minerals, and build high-tech equipment for various Bug projects. A single mountain range runs from one pole to the other; mines are located within this range. The main starport is at the north pole; significant fleet elements are located here. Orbital facilities, scanner stations, and covert gunboat bases are found scattered around the system, on or over the smaller planetoids.

Example Human Colony World: Noxus Beta

About 150 light-years rimwards from Terra is an ordinary yellow star; the agricultural world Noxus Beta circles in the habitable zone.

A small, rocky planet orbits the sun much further in,

Noxus Beta is 8000 kilometers in diameter, with a surface gravity of 0.45 G. About half of the world is covered by oceans of warm, salty water. There is a single, small moon orbiting the world.

Local life forms had risen to about the level of complicated amino acids when the first settlements were placed here, 200 years ago. With some terraforming encouragement, the atmosphere is now a standard oxygen-nitrogen mixture, capable of supporting human life. Average daytime temperatures are about 20

degrees Centigrade.

An enormous, ancient meteor crater is still visible, just above the equator; it is about 5,000 kilometers in diameter. Erosion has created several breaks in the crater wall, allowing the 'regular' seas to flow into the crater. The seas elsewhere on the planet have a few deep chasms, but within the crater the water is a nearly uniform 150 meters deep. The weather is mild, and the seas are placid.

[When the meteor struck Noxus Beta, several hundred thousand years ago, the initial impact removed crust and outer magma to a depth of 800 kilometers; the planet was scorched by waves of heat, and much of the (previously thick) atmosphere was blown off. Molten material flowed back into the crater, forming a relatively smooth surface, now the seafloor of the huge crater.]

Temporary ice caps cover the poles in winter, only a few hundred kilometers in diameter.

The land area of Noxus Beta is generally smooth; volcanic activity on this world is unknown, and no significant tectonic drift is occurring. Erosion has smoothed off what mountain ranges remained from long ago.

A single city (Nox Port) houses nearly a quarter of the human and Synthetic inhabitants, on an island about a thousand kilometers long in the northern temperate zone. The only spaceport is located beside this city. A few hundred thousand persons live on Noxus Beta, almost all employees of the Noxus Beta Corporation, which in turn owns the entire planet. Ownership of the NBC is divided among a few of the corporate houses of the United Planets; it has been in charge of the planet since its settlement. There isn't much to NBC besides this planet, and an office on Avalon.

Much of the land and water area of Noxus Beta is under automated cultivation, for vegetable and animal foodstuffs. Small towns, called ag-camps, dot the landscape (or mounted on floating platforms in the seas). Enormous numbers of robots, automated harvesters, vaporators, sensor platforms, and trans-bots do much of the work. NBC's employees install, operate and maintain the equipment.

The society on Noxus Beta is very tranquil, and perhaps considered dull by some. There are certainly festivals, holidays, scandals, crimes, and such; but in comparison with other worlds, life here has few surprises.

Unsurprisingly, the more rebellious youth of Noxus Beta tend to leave their home world for an exciting, dangerous life among the stars. "If there's a bright center to the universe, you're on the planet that it's farthest from."

Example Skinny Colonized World: Pikru

Circling an ordinary yellow star is the Skinny colony planet Pikru.

The diameter is 9600 kilometers, the surface gravity 0.7 G. The atmosphere is quite breathable by ordinary humans and Skinnies, the average daytime temperature is 22 degrees Centigrade. About 40% of the surface is covered in water; the two largest seas aren't connected, and the sea life varies quite a bit between them.

Small icecaps sit atop the poles, enlarging and shrinking with the seasons. No large mountain ranges are found on the planet; broad plains lead gradually to marshy areas around the seas.

Native life - grasses, insects, primitive trees - competes well with imported biology.

About 200 million Skinnies live on Pikru; some are descended from the original colonists of 200 years ago, others are more recently arrived. Eight cities are present; one of them, First Landing, is near the north polar zone, and supports the only spaceport.

Two noble Nests control Pikru; one has its capital at First Landing, and the other is based in a city on an equatorial peninsula. The heads of these Nests rarely visit Pikru; delegates, usually junior members of the Nests, act as governors. Some small wars and squabbles have occurred in the last 200 years, between the Nests, usually without any damage to the civilian populations. The Nest rulers are of the same Skinny stock as the population, but share almost none of the locals' culture.

Pikru does not produce enough agricultural surplus to trade for much in the way of technology; local industry is unable to construct devices any more advanced than those of 20th century Terra, for example.

The planetary culture Zassarians had centuries to deviate from their off-world roots before they fled other Nest persecution to colonize this world. The original colonists were rather hulking in appearance, barely fulfilling their nickname of Skinny. Mated couples go to great lengths to raise only one child at a time -- most siblings are at least 16 years apart in age. Curiosity is greatly valued; in fact, travelers find the locals to be rather annoying in that regard. Despite fairly clear scientific evidence, the colonists insist that they are not Zassarian, but in fact an entirely alien race from a different level of reality. They speak an 'artificial' language, very easy to learn.

The planet's most famous feature is the Shipwreck. Embedded in the bottom of one of the local seas is an enormous alien spaceship, originally about 18 kilometers long. The tapered, armored hull is slanted at about a 45 degree angle, and about 12 kilometers of the vessel protrudes above the water; the very aft end of the vessel is 8,400 meters above the water. The ship struck the planet about 55,000 years ago; only the armored hull survived the impact and the subsequent passage of time. A compacted mass of metal and organics fills the nose of the ship, deep below the water and the seabed. The locals have been obsessing about the origin of the ship since the first colonists arrived. A series of navigational beacons run along the edges of the wreck, to prevent aircraft from colliding with it.

The solar system contains a few nav beacons, a couple of automated scanner stations, and no defenses. Three artificial satellites orbit Pikru, combining weather observation with communications relay functions.

Exploited Worlds

Exploited worlds are those that are not particularly interesting for colonial purposes, but have resources that one or more of the dominant races of Common Space find useful enough to mine or harvest on a planet, rather than extract from asteroids.

Some are the sole property of one race, and others are exploited jointly.

Example Exploited World: G777BZ

About 250 light-years from Terra, near the Kelmor Cluster, is a grubby world being stripped of its valuable resources. It has no proper name, just catalog numbers in various databases. The most common of these designators is G777BZ; the local miners call it “Triple Seven”.

It has a diameter of 6,400 kilometers, with a surface gravity of 0.35 G. It orbits a dim, reddish star rather closely, but even so the surface temperatures are moderate. However, the thin atmosphere contains no oxygen. There is no native life, and very little imported life (outside of some greenhouses).

About 50,000 humans, synthetics and aliens toil here, extracting crystals, heavy metals, and radioactive materials from the planet. Some of the mines extend down 500 kilometers underground, nearly to the molten magma below.

The United Planets maintains a government center here, but two corporations actually run the world – Chesterton Minerals (Planetary Manager Dearborn Chi) and Twellik (Planetary Manager Hive Brain Tnukt’pin – commonly called Tanak); both are based off-world. There was a third corporation, T’chilnuk, present until about 20 years ago during the Three Way War, when it was overwhelmed by the other two with the connivance of the company’s planetary manager, Tnukt’pin). Mining began on this world about 200 years ago in a privately arranged cooperative alliance between the Earth Corporation, an industrial Bug Hive, and an enterprising Skinny Nest. For most of the war years the three organizations maintained a strict neutrality, but then the Hive started some aggressive moves against both Human and Skinny domebases. The two corporate entities did what they do best, they suborned the Hive Brain, who made arrangements for his advancement to the local Skinny representative position and abandoned the Hive station.

Very few of the residents remain here for their whole lives. Most of the miners are recruited from colony worlds and other “backwater” areas in the United Planets. Some of them are paid in gold, some in UP credits; an ordinary miner earns about 3,000 credits per year.

Each of the remaining corporations operates about 100 domebases, scattered about the planet. The domebases are each the center of a network of huge grubbers (digging into the ground), carriers (moving the ores across the surface), and scows (moving the ore to orbit). Three ore-processing stations are in orbit above the planet (one for each surviving corporation, and a damaged, unused one built by T’chilnuk). There are landing fields near each domebase, but no central spaceport on-world. An orbital station, maintained by the United Planets, provides some services to ships besides those of Chesterton Minerals and Twellik. A few nav beacons and a single automated scan station float in the system, courtesy of the United Planets. Every month or so, a multi-million ton transport Hole ship arrives from each of the two companies, to carry off the processed metals, crystals, and other products.

Domebase: each supports about 180 workers and 10 to 20 “white collar” types. They have a geochemistry lab, and a small interior bay to house a single carrier plus a small orbital shuttle. Simple sensors are present, mostly to guide the shuttles and scows to their landings.

Grubber: a 1200 ton, tracked-mounted excavator. A crew of 6 to 8 operates the

vehicle; up to 10 humans can be supported by the grubber's life support system. The crew operates the grubber on two-week shifts.

Carrier: a wheeled vehicle (on this planet, at least), capable of hauling 1000 tons of ore. A 2 man crew operates the vehicle; they normally spend their "off shift" time in a domebase, but the vehicle can provide life support for up to a month.

Scows: these are 200,000 ton orbital shuttles, able to carry about 180,000 tons of rock up to the processing stations. A single cabin supports a two-person crew -- the scow's computers are perfectly capable of carrying out all normal operations without a crew aboard, however. Thus, many trips are made in violation of company policies, without one or both of the crew aboard, or with unqualified crew members. The cargo of ore is carried in an "ore hopper," a modular container -- the scow grabs a full hopper at a domebase, hauls it to the processing plant in orbit, and carries an empty hopper down to the surface.

The domebases, grubbers, carriers, and scows are all about 200 years old. They were built to last about as long as the planet would yield useful ores; but the planet still has riches to remove, while the equipment is very battered and worn.

The Bug presence is limited to the Twellik station, all the Nest personnel on the planet are either Skinnies or Skinny synthetics.

Example Exploited World: Carneval "City of a Thousand Pleasures"

The planet Carneval orbits the star known to Terrans as Antares B, the hot blue companion star to the huge, red Antares A. The red star has a diameter of 2 AU; the smaller star orbits it at a distance of 300 AU with Carneval about 5 AU from its primary. Viewed from the surface of Carneval, the red star appears about five times larger than Sol as seen from Terra while its primary seems about the same diameter as Sol.

The light of Antares A is very red (in fact the sun produces most of its light as infrared), whereas the actinic light of the Type B companion star is unpleasant and likely to cause sunburns. On Carneval, the two suns each produce about equal amounts of useful light. The planet's period of rotation is about 30 hours but day and night vary greatly depending on how many suns are in the sky.

Carneval has a diameter of 8,000 kilometers, and a surface gravity close to 1 G. There are no natural satellites, but hundreds of artificial stations, habitats, pleasure spheres, relays, defense stations, scan stations, and beacons are in orbit. 95% of the planet's surface is covered by water (the Thurkellian Sea); almost all of the dry land consists of a single continent in the northern hemisphere. The atmosphere is breathable at sea level by humans without requiring filters; the weather is mild, warm at the equator and cool at the poles -- no permanent icecaps are present.

The initial colonists of Carneval were human entrepreneurs who saw a need for a "Las Vegas in the Stars." For more than two hundred years, exotic animals, plants and other life-forms have been imported to Carneval; many have taken root in the local biosphere. Nothing is known about the planet's original life-forms, if any.

Unlike other Exploited Worlds, Carneval has no great stores of resources. Instead its location in relation to the other worlds of the United Planets is exploited, along with its minimal colonizable territory.

Most of the single continent is at an altitude of 10,000 meters above sea level, and the air among the mountains, or on the central plateau, is too thin for anyone of the Common Space races to easily survive. A band of terrain, about 200 kilometers broad, follows the coast of the continent for more than 3,000 kilometers; in the middle of this territory, between the plateau and the sea, is the City of Carneval. The city spreads gradually out east and west, along the southern edge of the continent; corporate estates, game preserves, hunting zones, warfare simulation regions, primitive lifestyle regions, etc. are all along the coast beyond the city. The surrounding territory is still a roaring hurricane of construction as more entertainment organizations try to build their share of the bonanza.

Nominally part of the United Planets, the planet is ruled by a Governor, a member of the United Planets Assembly. The position of Governor is a tremendous opportunity for graft and criminality. About the only effective taxation (effective for the rest of the United Planets, that is) are the entry and landing fees -- private starships are not normally allowed to enter the atmosphere except to land at the main starport. The main law on Carneval is "don't upset the tourists", followed by "if it's consensual, it's legal". The United Planets and the other races do constant inspections for Xenophorm influence, but if any known planet harbors the shapeshifters, it is probably Carneval.

While there are smaller landing fields for military, government, and highly-placed individuals, the primary spaceport is on the southwestern corner of the continent: Starshine. It is located on the equator, and several orbital elevators have their lower ends here. Starshine is also the hub of the transportation system; maglev trains and sky-cars rush east along the coast from the spaceport, stopping at various areas along the way. Cruise ships (of the water-borne type) depart from Starshine also, to float about the Thurkellian Sea or to follow the shore.

About ten million persons are on Carneval at any one time, of whom about half are visitors; a large number of synthetics are also present. Visitors average a two week stay; about 70,000 visitors arrive each day, several dozen ships. Thus about 25,000,000 persons visit Carneval each year (by comparison, about 40 million people visit Las Vegas each year). The tourists are mostly human or Synthetic; the majority is from resource worlds, space colonies, or other places to "get away from" for a vacation. Bugs, Skinnies, and Clodhoppers have become more common since the end of the Wars. Some of the concessionaires are starting to develop special attractions for aliens.

Customers come from all over the United Planets, and even from a few systems outside of the United Planets. Besides the vessels carrying passengers, several ships a day bring foodstuffs and other supplies, and take away the resulting money. Carneval was a main liberty port for United Planets ships during the Wars and was never attacked by any participant. Why it enjoyed this immunity from military intrusion is a mystery that several factions are bemused by.

While Carneval's reputation is somewhat salacious, areas exist to cater for every tourist's whim or need, no matter how mundane and proper. Sports, music, camping, hiking, singing in choirs, weight loss (or gain), cooking lessons, simulations of ancient places and events, religious retreats, business conferences, circuses, parades, and children's shows all can be found on Carneval -- but the sensual, narcotic, barbaric, risky and violent attractions are

more famous.

Most of Carneval's permanent inhabitants are part of the "service industry." Since the Xenophorm Wars, they are vetted with various degrees of success for shapeshifter abilities. Some residents claim to be half human, half Xeno. They don't make this claim when Inspectors are around. Strange cults and political groups have sprung up among the poorer and more exploited of the residents. Most of these are unimportant, transitory, and un-noticed; but a few gain adherents, cause trouble, emigrate, disappear mysteriously, or otherwise perform unexpected acts.

Open Worlds

Open Worlds is the official designation in the treaties between the dominant races of Common Space for worlds that are open to colonization or exploitation but nothing has been done with them.

Some of these are colony worlds that were devastated in the recent wars, so that there is no clear owner. Treaties allow for more than one race to attempt colonization of such a world at the same time. The colonists are expected to make whatever arrangements are necessary to keep the planet from dissolving into open warfare. Such worlds are visited regularly, but sudden disappearances of small colonies happen.

Example Open World: Kortellin Prime

Kortellin Prime has the distinction of being the most resource-heavy planet well-known to the local star-faring races that is not safely snuggled under the wing of one star power or another. Neither is it being fought over.

The Lur mine it for crystals they use in their unique technology, but it is too far away from their power base for them to seriously guard it. Frelltek (See Freeborn) maintains a small mining colony, dragging heavy metals from some surface outcroppings, but they studiously ignore anything going on elsewhere on the planet. There is said to be a Freeborn base on the planet, but no one knows where it might be.

The planet is large, almost 20,000 kilometers in diameter, and its gravity registers 1.8G. It resides on the outer borders of its small star's "Life zone," and though the atmosphere is an oxygen-nitrogen mix, it cannot be easily breathed by most sapient beings because of the toxic materials that are suspended in it. "Summer was a day three months ago" is a common joke of any resident, of whatever race. There are signs the planet was once inhabited, but the ruins are ancient and no trace of the technology of the previous inhabitants can be found. There is very little water that is not bound up in ice, and the ice water is poisonous if melted.

If the planet were closer to some of the higher technology star nations it might be of more interest, but for now it just rests in its lonely orbit (there are no other planets in the system, just space junk) and awaits whatever fate the universe has waiting for it.

Example Open World: Cleathrine

Cleathrine was an anomaly within the United Planets. An Earth-like planet around a K star, its gravity is .9 G and the atmosphere is quite comfortable for

human life. There are three moons, each of them about half the size of Luna. The system also boasts a rocky mini-planet closer to the sun and three gas giants in the cold zone, each with several moons.

The owner of the planet was a Zassarian entrepreneur-Nest Lord, who took over the planet from its human colonists shortly after it was settled. He swore fealty to the United Planets and established the planet as a manufacturer of Zassarian goods, which are highly bio-oriented. Two continents were heavily industrialized, and the entrepreneur was slowly converting a third. There were also islands thoroughly terraformed and sea farmers who supplied food for the industrial plants (a word with multiple meanings when considered against Zassarian bio-industrial practices). The family was relatively beneficent and there was little sign of unrest. The United Planets presence was mostly a section of the space elevator near the capitol city and some atmosphere miners and a couple of gunboats.

Then the United Planets and the Zassarians combined to war against the Bugs as part of the Three Way War. For the most part, damage to the alliance took place in Zassarian space, but one Bug probe attack found Cleathrine. The United Planets defenses had been stripped to be used elsewhere and the ruler of the planet had very little defense against space attack. Bug commandoes descended and had most of the planet under control within days.

But the United Planets had been alerted, and the Navy under Commodore Proclus arrived before the planet could be secured. Mindful of the value of the planet, Proclus drove away the Bug space assets and then re-invaded the planet.

Proclus tried to limit the damage, but his, and the Bug, unfamiliarity with Zassarian methods and processes made disaster inevitable. Things got loose, processes went astray, areas had to be abandoned. By the end of the Battle for Cleathrine, the two main continents were very dangerous areas indeed. With the last Bug dead or departed, the civilian population of the world was mostly on the third continent.

Today, the Cleathrine system is still trying to rebuild. The heirs of the Zassarian entrepreneur have taken over the reins of the planet and are trying to reclaim the original colonies, but they have to continue under strict bio-invasion lockdown protocols. They also have no official ties to either Zarassia or the United Planets. Their space defenses are still minimal, though the United Planets maintains a base within a day's travel.

Bio-researchers from the United Planets, Zarassia, and the Bugs, and probably Freeborn as well, are known to promote expeditions to the wild areas of Cleathrine to gather specimens for research. Some do not return.

Ravaged Worlds

Some worlds are exploited until they have no value to anyone, except possibly as a hiding place. The races of Common Space have no claim to these worlds, but the armed forces of the dominant races make a practice of surveying such worlds on a regular basis to guard against Xenophorm infiltration.

Example Ravaged World: Antaraxes IV

Circling the dull, orange star Antaraxes, about 50 light-years from Carneval, is a worked-out resource world, Antaraxes IV.

With a diameter of 10,000 kilometers, the surface gravity is 0.85 G. The mean surface temperature is 4.5 degrees Centigrade. The planet has no moons, but several derelict ships and stations are easily seen in the night sky.

This planet's biosphere was in the "early plants on dry land" stage of development when it was first surveyed, some 600 years ago, by the Hives. A massive "resource harvest" soon began, and after only 150 years ended, leaving the planet scarred, pitted and barren.

Since then, advances in materials science, extraction procedures, or demand for previously-unwanted materials have made further exploitation profitable from time to time. The most recent of these efforts, by a human corporation looking for one rare element, ended 50 years ago, before the Space Wars started. The planet is currently considered devoid of any recoverable value

The atmosphere is a foul but breathable fog; pollutants and a naturally humid environment combine to make a wretched, cold, wet, windy, nasty mess. Water, not drinkable unless filtered, covers about 80% of the surface, but never very deeply -- the maximum ocean depth is about 100 meters. Remnants of the original biosphere, and a few invasive species imports from off-world, can be found. Long exposure to the environment is not recommended for any of the Common Space races, though for Clodhoppers it is mostly an esthetic statement.

Literally tens of thousands of tunnels, landing fields, cableways, shacks, warehouses, greenhouses, haulers, loaders, barracks and powerplants litter the landscape, all deteriorating, and many dismantled by salvagers. 10 years ago the United Planets Navy used the planet's surface as a target for a fleet exercise; several dozen large, radioactive craters were the result.

From time to time independent salvage ships stop here, to rip some abandoned equipment apart. A small and shrinking population of humans and aliens are present -- exiles, insane nomads, or obsessive scavengers. Most avoid contact with strangers; visitors often (and wisely) avoid contact with these eccentric locals.

Sample Adventure - Weyn's World

Our heroes are part of a survey team sent to a planet that was unoccupied before the war and the system was quarantined because ships go in but they don't come out.

Our heroes are part of a larger group that has members of all classes. The expedition has two Hole Ships. One is a former heavy cruiser, the Rubino Diego, crewed by former Space Navy ratings. The other is a civilian transport, the Singapore Maru, that holds the explorers.

Circling an ordinary yellow star is a pleasantly habitable world, covered almost entirely in ocean. It is named after the scout who discovered the system. Only a single land mass about 500 to 2000 kilometers across extends above the seas from what might be called the arctic region to just beyond the equator, about

10,000 kilometers; this rocky continent is covered in verdant greenery (the plants are not native to the system). No birds or land animals except what has developed from a few small pests and pets brought on spacecraft; but the seas teem with aquatic life. On the island are a few ruined buildings, and three (visible) spacecraft. Astrographic sensors will reveal:

Immense radio static coming from the entire planetary surface

Interference with FTL comms systems

The world is one of the rare Earthlike worlds with a distinctive ring system like that of Saturn in the Sol system. The lowermost ring is close enough to the surface that it is constantly losing components to atmospheric disintegration. The two Hole Ships settle into an orbit outside the farthest-out ring.

A particularly observant PC will note that the ring system contains 20 million or so artificial objects. If examined, these will be seen as dark spindly objects, in the form of a six-armed cross; each is about a kilometer across, but only weighs about 100 kilograms. A moderate amount of debris, in the form of shiny balls of melted metal and synthetics, floats about the system and among the rings (remnants of previous ships visiting this system).

Observation of the surface of the planet has shown there are wrecked space ships on the surface, and some evidence of structures, but no artificial light (even campfires) at night. Observation of the surface is spotty, at best, because of the materials in the atmosphere from larger ring chunks burning up in the atmosphere and occasionally surviving long enough to crater or blow up in the lower atmosphere. Radar mapping is disrupted by the constant radio static.

The cruiser sends a dropship down to the planet, avoiding the equatorial plane the rings reside in. Suddenly, concealed orbital defense stations amongst the rings blast the dropship with missiles and mass driver guns. The gunners on the cruiser respond with counter missiles that blast the defense stations. But the Dropship is crippled and must crash on the planet. At the same time, other stations in the rings fill the communication bands with noise, blocking any radio communication anywhere in the system. Immediately after, an EMP goes off. The cruiser's electronics are hardened against EMPs, but the transport is crippled. Random(?) electronic pulses in the transport's navigation systems kick it out of orbit and down towards the planet.

New defense stations amongst the rings immediately attack the transport and an alarm goes throughout the ship. We are Breaking Up. Get to Escape Pods. As the Escape Pods break away from the transport, they are not targeted by the defense stations. Our Heroes and the other refugees watch as the transport is shot to pieces and falls toward the planet as so much space junk. The cruiser keeps attacking the defense stations and knocks several out, but is under fire from more defense stations. As their capsules descend into the cloud cover, they see the cruiser withdrawing and fighting. Our Heroes see the other capsules disappear into the clouds.

Minutes later, the capsule holding our heroes fires all of its retrojets in the right order and deploys the proper parachutes and they drift to the surface of the planet. The landing can be as exciting as the GM chooses to make it.

What is going on?

This world was a base of the Fennershi, a humanoid race of which few records remain. Many tens of thousands of years ago, an expanding Precursor Empire conquered and destroyed the Fennershi, but some of their ships still roamed the stars as insurgents or pirates. So the Empire seeded several worlds in this region of space as traps to gradually eliminate the problem. Each was different; each was subtle; probably only this one remains in operation.

The Warden of Weyn's World is an Old Imperial computer; like the current civilization, thinking machines in the old Emperor had autonomy. Its orders are to:

Hold all prisoners until the Empire comes for them. The Warden's interpretation: keep them alive or in stasis, to not allow them to leave the atmosphere of the planet.

Capture all non-Imperial ships, and take the crews prisoner. The Warden's interpretation: if a non-Imperial ship enters the atmosphere, disable and capture it.

Preserve your existence. The Warden's interpretation: don't let ships leave the system if they might have figured out what's going on here.

The trap caught a few Fennershi ships long ago, and then nothing at all for thousands of years. The Fennershi crews were placed in stasis by the Warden, and as it gradually (very gradually) becomes bored, it awakens a few of them to talk to. Eventually, the Fennershi become insane, uncommunicative, or too old to be interesting, and are returned to stasis.

A few more recent ships have been trapped here. The three ships still visible are:

A heavily battle-damaged military (well, pirate) Dropship, of about 15,000 tons mass. It comes from Freeborn Space, and has only been here for six months.

A small, apparently undamaged, saucer-shaped vessel, with three spindly landing legs; it only weighs about 10 tons.

A rusting and decayed prospecting Hole ship, of a type common in the United Planets two hundred and fifty years ago. At that time Hole Ships were made in all sizes and types. This one looks like it could hold 1-10 crew members.

Besides the Warden, Four beings, or groups of beings, inhabit the continent (more may be in stasis, underground):

Lyodeth, a Fennershi. She was released from stasis three years before and is already a bit wonky and afraid of contact with any non-Fennershi.

A trio of aliens, of an unknown race. If the exploration crew contains a Clodhopper, it will recognize them as Teneberians, a very old race that is almost never seen in this region of space. Their ship is a dropship, considering what happened to Our Heroes' Hole Ship, perhaps what happened to their Hole Ship this is not a large mystery. They have been on the planet for five years, trading philosophies with the Warden.

A gang of Skinny space pirates, with a sub-faction of a dozen human pirates who are trying to survive on their own. The leader wants to find the Warden and take over the planet, thinking it would be a great pirate base. The Warden is letting him hatch his plans to help break the monotony.

Joseph Farrington, a human space prospector. He was the only crew of the prospecting ship and tries to keep away from anyone else of any race. He was put in stasis by the Warden but released when the pirates arrived. The Warden thought he might learn something from their interaction. Contrary to the Warden's expectations, Joe wants nothing to do with anyone else on the planet. That's why he's a prospector. He is poking into every nook and cranny to see what he can find and is a great resource for the secrets of the planet if he can be persuaded to talk. Joe is a Pilot 6.

The cross-shaped objects in the rings are a solar power array; the Warden can command them to deploy using some manner of FTL radio. Each cross can unfurl in a couple of minutes into a hexagon of silvery material nearly 1 kilometer across, and align itself as the Warden commands. The Warden uses the hexagonal reflectors to absorb solar power for his defenses. They can also be used to roughly focus the sun's light on a target. The focus can't get any finer than about 3 kilometers in diameter, but 20 trillion square meters of reflector can put quite a bit of energy on a target. That's how the Warden destroyed the Teneberian Hole Ship when it deployed weaponry that might have wiped out his defenses.

This system hasn't been fully surveyed (successfully), of course. Combatants in the recent wars would make look-see sweeps through it to see if there was any evidence of enemy activity. There wasn't.

What is Roaming the Continent?

Over the centuries, many domesticated animals and assorted vermin have been unleashed upon the continent. The centuries of radio emissions from the radio blocking have acted like evolution accelerators. Rats and alien vermin have developed into grazing herds. Ship's cats have evolved into Apex Predators; lapdogs are Pack Predators. Some alien's little bug-eyed buddies have turned into Bug-Eyed Monsters. And some alien pests have just turned into Swarms that can strip a Rat Cow clean in minutes.

Some have been partially domesticated by captives released from stasis, much to the Warden's bemusement in watching them.

Some of these breeds have been helped along in development by the Warden. His Stasis Fields hold their victims in a suspension of time, but he also has Time Spin fields that put generations of animals through centuries of evolution in hours.

Where the Warden Lurks

The Warden is a distributed intelligence. It has nodes throughout the continent. The continent is divided by a mountain range running its entire length from the Arctic Circle to where it becomes a series of small islands extending almost due south from the tip of the continent. All of the materiel the Warden keeps secure is under the mountain range, including a couple of launch tubes for automated maintenance robots that refurbish and repair the ring defenses and resupply them with ammunition. The stasis chambers are in a separate facility in the temperate zone. There are very few operative Fennerashi left. That's why there is only one of them walking free on the continent. Beings from other civilizations are also in stasis, just what they are is up to the GM.

The Warden does have a dozen Trulgren in stasis. The Trulgren are a large,

strong, not terribly bright, race that served the Old Empire as muscle. If any part of the complex is threatened, the Trulgren are released wearing excellent armor and carrying laser weapons.

Near the stasis chambers is a large room with a huge throne. The Face of the Warden is projected on the back of the throne when he wants to impress a visitor. This is no part of the original setup for the world, but the Warden thought it would be a nice touch when he woke up stasis residents.

Also under the mountains are his automated factories that can turn out weapons and ammunition for the ring defenses and the Trulgren. The automation is very sophisticated but could be hacked by a proper Agent or Hunter to provide just about any piece of equipment needed.

Where the Warden Wanders

The Warden does not wander so much as shift his focus. He can appear as a disembodied voice projected through ubiquitous nanospeakers almost impossible to find. He can also appear as a holographic embodiment in a shape that is similar to any sapient he has put in stasis. Each of the various folk wandering about the surface thinks he has a different shape. Interestingly, one of his shapes is an Amoeboid, but one that can talk to the viewer in an understandable language. Once the Warden has a chance to determine which of the many languages he knows is appropriate, he starts talking to the newest visitor.

The conversation can take ten minutes, or a dozen years. The Warden helps the survivor find food and shelter and tells him the rules, which include no attempts to signal anyone. Cooking fires have to be set in caves or one of the ruined buildings or ships. The radio blocking still works. The Warden's speakers and holo-projectors are all hard wired. If Our Heroes are clever, they might figure out a way to use the wires for their own communication.

What Happened to the Other Exploration Party Members?

All of the escape capsules were not as lucky as Our Heroes. The Singapore Maru was shot down over the continent, but high altitude winds and the direction the capsule was initially shot all have an effect. Some landed in the ocean and are drifting on the waves still. Some lost their chutes and plummeted to the deaths of the escapees. Some are hanging from a cliff face with no way of getting out.

Other capsules have landed safely, including cargo capsules carrying gear and no riders. Colonial Troopers wanting to upgrade their suits need to find these capsules, and find technicians who can give the suits their upgrades. The GM can make the search for these capsules as hard or easy as serves the purpose of the adventure.

Coming across the slaughtered members of the expedition who were caught out by the various evolved pets residing on the continent should give Our Heroes something to think about.

What are the Pirates Doing?

Janzir Thosh, the Pirate leader (the original captain died with his ship) saw a resupply shuttle leave the mountains to resupply the ring defenses. So he and his hearty band are trying to find a way down to where he suspects the Warden lives. The Warden has done nothing to seriously discourage this plan. Hidden

speakers keep telling the pirates that they are not allowed to dig where they are digging. The implication is that the Warden has no ground defenses to enforce his regulations. This implication is misleading. Besides the Trulgren, the Warden also has stationary weapons ready for a break in to any part of his complex.

What is the Cruiser Doing?

One shot by the Defense Stations managed to find the Cruiser's Black Hole generation device. The cruiser cannot leave the system to summon help. Pretty much the entire expedition purse is wrapped up in the two ships. The captain is trying to find some way to communicate with the explorers on the ground, but the radio interference is still omnipresent.

What has Farrington Found?

Farrington has discovered a semi-collapsed tunnel that leads to the secret Underground. He is not the first. Several of the animals that were released from various ships over the millennia found it, and their heavily mutated descendants claim the tunnel. The tunnel leads to a passageway that leads to all of the Underground. The whole tunnel and passageway complex was supposed to be buried after everything was implanted, but the earth has shifted several times. This has cleared the tunnels and has opened several natural shafts and tunnels to the main complex.

Teneberian Description

The Teneberians are short and hairy humanoids who have a knack for creating knickknacks and mechanical gadgets. Yes, they are similar to fantasy dwarves. Their society is falling in upon itself, and these were part of a group seeking a challenge to raise their people back to glory.

For the last few years they have been engaging the Warden in philosophical discussions hopefully directed toward the Warden giving them a Hole Ship and letting them go. So far, no luck, but they have had several interesting discussions on whether the Warden owes any loyalty to its obviously long gone builders (this is not so obvious to the Warden) and just how it might build a Hole Ship with its current facilities.

Fennershi Description

The Fennershi are a tall, slim, humanoid race with excellent Psychic powers. They cannot be mistaken for any but the most extravagantly gene-modded human. Their arms and legs just don't have the same angles as human limbs, and their heads are faintly snouted. Their hair has silver highlights and their skin can naturally be one of a dozen colors or shades. Lyodeth, the Fennershi currently on the surface has pale skin with blue shadows and highlights. She is a 6th level Hunter, 5th level Psychic.

Appendix: N

These rules have several sources that prompted elements of the worlds of Common Space. Sources listed here are mainly from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, before the mainstream world realized that stars could trek and have wars.

Starship Troopers by Robert A. Heinlein

Star Beast by Robert A. Heinlein

Trouble Twisters of the Polseotechnic League by Poul Anderson

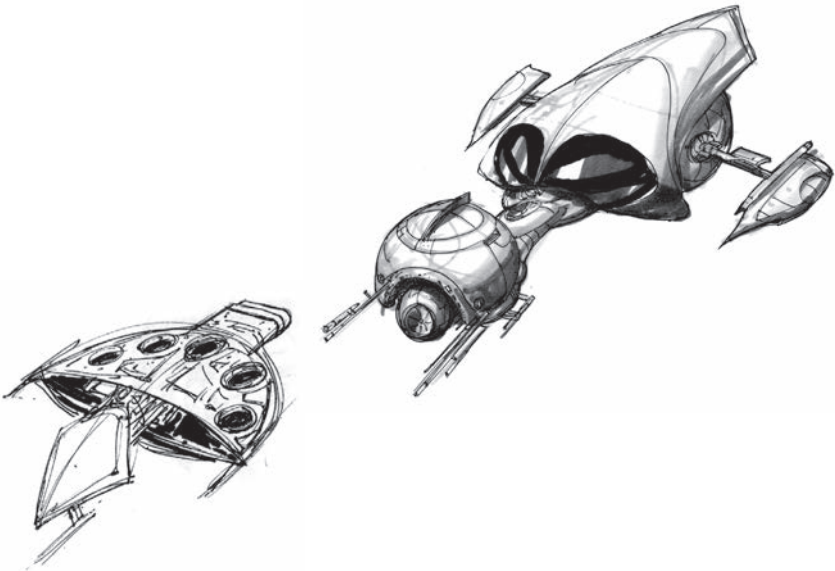
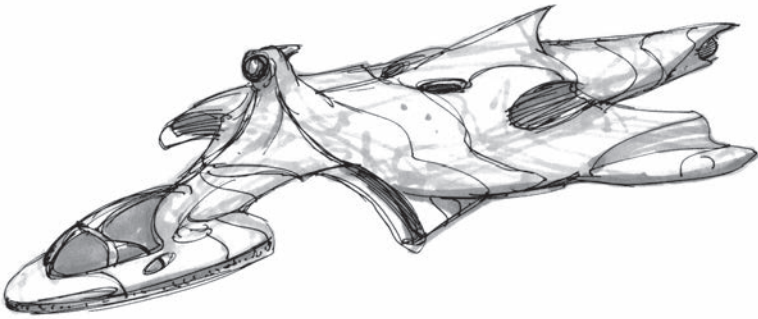
Dune by Frank Herbert

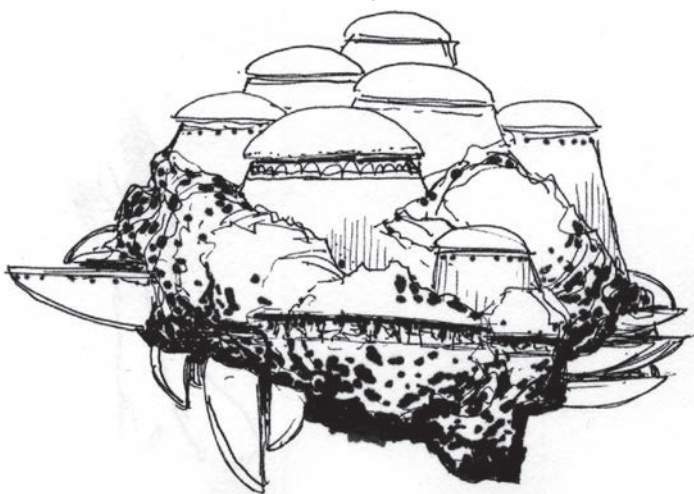
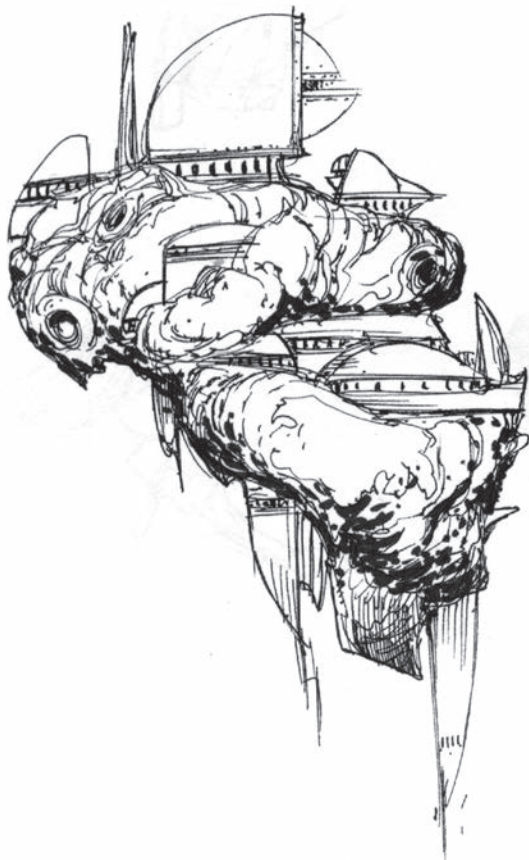
Foundation Series by Isaac Asimov

Star Ranger by Andre Norton

Beast Master by Andre Norton

Forerunner Foray by Andre Norton





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What if the first RPG was inspired by hard Science Fiction as written by Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, and Frank Herbert instead of Tolkienesque fantasy?

Colonial Troopers is a science fiction RPG compatible with the original fantasy roleplaying game and subsequent editions, and other “OSR” games that follow in the mould of the original like Swords & Wizardry, Adventurer Conqueror King, Labyrinth Lord, Guardians, and Warriors of the Red Planet. If your tastes run towards battle hardened combat armor, some attention to real physics, and explorations of just what it is to be human, you’ve found the right book. As in the fiction of the above writers, the players are confronted with an unforgiving universe full of wonders and deadly quirks of science ready to astound and enchant, and cull the unwary.

