STAR WARS®

ROLEPLAYING GAME

Quick Starfields

A *Galactic Campaign Guide*

Web Enhancement

By Peter Schweighofer and JD Wiker

Not all space is void. Interesting settings can harbor intriguing encounters while journeying aboard a starship, approaching or leaving a destination, or evading foes. Heroes can use astrographical formations to their benefit. In *Attack of the Clones*, Jango Fett flies *Slave I* into an asteroid field to evade Obi-Wan Kenobi in his Jedi starfighter, deploying concussion mines to further hinder pursuit. Han Solo attempts to lose Imperial forces in the asteroid field near Hoth in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Below, you'll find examples and guidelines for four typical locations in space: asteroid fields, mine fields, nebulae, and planetary orbits. Use these when heroes encounter them during their misadventures or just to add atmosphere and authenticity to their interstellar travels.

Asteroid Field

When solid stellar bodies break up, asteroid belts form in orbit around the system's central gravitational feature (usually a star). These asteroid fields consist of rocky and icy chunks ranging from a few centimeters wide to the size of small moons. Although most settle into stable orbits parallel to planetary trajectories around a sun, asteroids have unstable rotations within the field, knocking around at different velocities and courses and violently colliding to generate smaller but more numerous asteroids.

Planetary rings consist of debris from destroyed or decayed moons and function like a system's asteroid field in orbit around a central world.

Pilots usually plot courses to avoid asteroid fields and planetary ring formations. Field drift over some worlds results in a closely orbiting, variable astrographical hazard. Starport authorities on these planets either blast transit corridors through the fields regularly or track asteroid courses and post the locations and times when natural clearings appear. Pirates, bounty hunters, and raiders sometimes lurk in asteroid fields waiting for their prey, assuming their vessels can maintain minimum power, raise adequate shields, and slip into an orbit that avoids asteroid collisions. Some industrial concerns mine or harvest asteroids for their concentrations of valuable minerals, though these operations entail great danger given a field's unstable nature.

Description

Pieces of rock and ice fly wildly within an asteroid field, smashing into each other and creating more debris. Occasionally, a collision sends a few asteroids out of the orbital ring around a star (or out of planetary rings), becoming astrographical hazards for vessels navigating the clear space lanes within a system.

Asteroid size ranges significantly within a field. Recently created asteroid belts have immense chunks of rock large enough to land on. Some massive asteroids have their own stable rotations and irregular orbits of lesser bodies. Older fields have greater numbers of smaller asteroids, the result of millions of years of rocks crashing into one another and wearing themselves down into dust.

Special Game Rules

An asteroid belt's density determines the DC for Pilot checks when maneuvering in the field. A light-density belt requires

a Pilot check (DC 10) every round to avoid colliding with an asteroid. A medium-density field requires a Pilot check (DC 20) every round, and a high-density field requires a Pilot check (DC 30) every round. The asteroid belts near Hoth seen in *The Empire Strikes Back* and the one Obi-Wan flies through in *Attack of the Clones* could be considered high-density fields. Gunners spotting asteroids nearby can fire at them with shipboard weapons, taking into account size modifiers.

If a pilot fails his general check to avoid debris, he finds his ship immediately on a collision course with an asteroid. Roll on Table 1: Asteroid Size to determine size, appropriate modifiers, and the Pilot DC to avoid. To dodge it at the last minute requires a Pilot check based on the asteroid's size. A successful check avoids a crash, but a failure deals damage based on the vessel's speed, the asteroid size, and the collision vector as detailed in Ramming and Collisions in Chapter 11 of the revised core rulebook.

Mines, missiles, or other explosives set off in asteroid fields have a greater chance of hitting their target. Although the weapon may actually miss the target, a nearby explosion can deal normal damage due to the abundance of rocky shrapnel. Explosives gain a +2 bonus to hit targets within asteroid fields.

Asteroid Size Table

Roll 1d20 to determine the size of any given asteroid encountered, using the following modifiers: +2 for a moderately aged field and +4 for an old field.

Table 1: Asteroid Size

d20 Roll	Asteroid Size	Modifier	Pilot Check DC
1–2	Colossal	–8	40
3–4	Gargantuan	–4	35
5–7	Huge	–2	30
8–10	Large	–1	25
11–13	Medium-size	+0	20
14–15	Small	+1	15
16–17	Tiny	+2	10
18–19	Diminutive	+4	5
20+	Fine	+8	0

Adventure Hook

Pirates Haunt Keller's Void: Udine System—Authorities believe pirates operating in Keller's Void are responsible for the disappearance of several vessels en route between Wroona and Calus. "We suspect remnants of an asteroid mining operation in the Udine system revolted and formed a pirate band," announced Blissa Vlix, head of Wroona's Trade and Traffic Ministry. "As they were aware of the hyperlane shortcut through nearby Keller's Void, they began towing immense asteroids to block starships and force them out of hyperspace." Vlix noted that the pirate fleet contained enough firepower to subdue most ships, including the lost starliner *Kooba's Pride*. Wroonian authorities have little jurisdiction outside their system, but have posted a 500,000-credit bounty on the pirates to encourage independent parties to root them out of the Udine asteroid field and put an end to their raiding activities.

Mine Field

Warring forces sometimes deploy mine fields to deny enemy ships the use of small regions of space: frequently used traffic lanes, approaches to orbital facilities or moons, mustering areas, or outer reaches of systems where enemy ships might emerge from hyperspace. Strategists rarely resort to mines, since they linger long after deployed, and current tactics in capital ship and starfighter patrols are almost as effective in rebuffing aggressor vessels.

Mine fields in plain sight often deter enemy craft from approaching or channel them into an easily defended approach. Defenders deploy them in a regular orbit around a spaceborne facility or moon so they can track them and monitor openings. For tactical reasons, mines are often hidden in an asteroid field, nebula, or debris field to mask their presence and catch intruders unawares.

Military forces use two kinds of mines: passive and active. Most mines released in fields are passive, detonating only when another body (usually a ship) bumps them or comes within a preset sensor range. Active mines are rarely deployed, since they pose a greater hazard to traffic and are notoriously difficult to deactivate and clear. Active mines react to targets entering their extended sensor range by tracking them and closing in like a missile. Most home in on engine wash, communication signals, and other energy readings emanating from starships.

Description

Overtly deployed mine fields tend to disperse the explosives in a regular pattern with a slight buffer between each device's maximum sensor range. Passive mine fields tend toward more dense concentrations, while the longer ranges on active mines allow them a wider spread. The larger the area to protect, the thinner the mine density.

Mines deployed in asteroid belts or debris fields are susceptible to premature detonation by collision with other bodies (this problem is particularly troublesome for passive mines primed to detonate on impact). Minelayers typically set explosives into orbits around large pieces of debris or immense asteroids to avoid accidental discharge, though many still fall prey to hits by smaller objects on their own courses. In some cases, mines are actually affixed to asteroids and debris to further mask their presence.

Special Game Rules

Scanner operators seeking individual mines must make Computer Use checks to detect Fine objects. The presence of other objects (asteroids, debris) may increase the difficulty by +4.

Passive mines lurk in the square in which they were deployed. They target any vessel entering their square, attacking with a +10 bonus and dealing 8d10×2 points of damage.

To determine if an active mine spots a nearby ship, use the Sensors rules in Chapter 11 of the revised core rulebook. Simply roll 1d20 to make a Computer Use check for the mine's sensors based on various modifiers for target size, range, and situation. If the mine spots an approaching vessel, it fires its engines and begins closing on the target
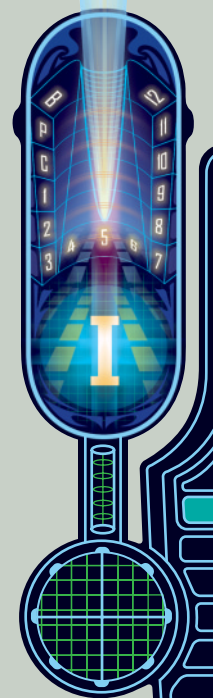
like a missile, moving 9 squares for up to 6 rounds, making an attack roll (with the +10 bonus of an ordinary quality missile) when it enters the same square as the target. If it hits, it deals 8d10×2 points of damage. If it expends its fuel before impacting the target, the mine fires a final stabilization burst of compressed air and becomes a passive mine in the square in which it stops.

Adventure Hook

Orders from HQ: Our task force needs to move through the asteroid field ahead to set up ambush points before our next action. Advance scouts ran into some old remote mines among the outer edge of asteroids, active mines that pursued and destroyed our lead craft before it could escape. Your team is fresh. Take whatever ships you feel are best suited for the job (starfighters or armed gunboats) and start clearing that mine field. We're not quite sure how deep into the asteroid field it runs, nor what it was initially intended to protect. Our astrographical databanks indicate that there's nothing but asteroids in there. If you encounter anything strange that doesn't show up on our charts, investigate and report.

Nebula

Stars emerge from and die within vast clouds of dust and gas called nebulae. Most result from supernova explosions or outgassing of slowly dimming stars. The resulting materials swirl in a chaotic cloud until gravitational forces inevitably draw them together to congeal into protostars. Since the process can take hundreds of millions of years, nebulae often remain relatively established astrographical features in the overall galactic scheme.

Since they contain small particles, nebulae present obstacles to hyperspace travel. Starships can still travel through them in normal space, though these journeys present many hazards during the long time it takes to traverse the entire width of a nebula. The gaseous clouds offer a haven for various endeavors: a hiding place for lurking pirates, a well-screened location for a secret base, a refuge for fleeing smugglers, or a home to a lost yet lingering alien species. Some nebulae born of dying stars still harbor planets inhospitable to life that may prove useful.

Description

Nebulae span vast portions of space, at the very least several times the size of a typical system. Their roiling gasses expand and contract among the conflicting gravitational forces slowly struggling to condense new star clusters. Gases glow red, green, and blue from ionized hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Ion flashes occasionally jump from one cloud to another, releasing energy built up from intense heat and friction. Gravitational fluxes draw together gas plumes, planetary debris, and newly formed stars. Other hazards lurking within nebulae include newly formed clusters of protostars, globules of condensed, burning plasma, neutron stars with high radiation and dense gravitational pulls, and black holes born from collapsing stars.

The farther from gravitational forces, the less dense gas and debris become. Pilots find navigating a nebula's outer reaches much easier than plunging into the deeper regions. Charged gas and condensing stars play havoc with sensors and communications, masking both once ships enter the roiling clouds. Vessels attract random bursts of ion lightning that can short out vital ship systems. Gas clouds suddenly ignite in violent plasma flares. Those desperate enough to enter a nebula often leave their pursuers behind, yet enter an entirely new region of unpredictable danger.

Special Game Rules

The energy bursts, gas clouds, and gravitational hazards in a nebula increases the DC of all Computer Use checks for sensors and communications by +10. These conditions also negate weapon bonuses to fire control, as targeting computers have little or confused data with which to track targets.

Each round a vessel flies through a nebula's stormy regions, it has a 1 in 6 chance of attracting an ion lightning strike. A branch of lightning that hits the craft deals 5d10 points of ion damage (see Table 11–11: Ion Damage in the revised core rulebook for details). Some facilities situated in nebulae often bristle with conductor rods to attract and channel loose energy away from vital areas of the installation, even into energy capacitors to convert and store the power for future use. If this specialized equipment is installed and operational on a craft, it negates the detrimental effects of ion lightning.

Plasma flares occur deeper inside nebulae and only pose hazards to ships flying deeper into the gas clouds. Usually, these flares ignite as a result of intense friction among rapidly congealing gas molecules and ion lightning bursts; however, discharge of a ship's energy weapons can also ignite plasma into fiery flares. Each time a gunner fires a vessel's energy weapons, he has a 1 in 6 chance of setting off a nearby cloud of volatile, condensed gas that explodes and deals 8d10×2 points of damage.

Adventure Hook

Message from Snitchly Gritch: I heard a rumor that there's some secret enemy research facility deep within the Itani Nebula conducting some pretty important experiments. Something about studying condensing gases, energy discharges, and plasma clouds to try and make a weapon that consumes a planet's atmosphere with acid. Or was it incinerate a planet into a small, boiling sun? Something like that. Anyway, the station's supposedly bristling with sensors, instruments, and equipment to divert harmful ion lightning. The nearest settlement is the old navigational beacon maintenance installation of Darknon Station. Not much there, but it's a good base of operations for anyone looking into rumors of that research facility.

Planetary Orbit

Approaches to worlds often hold potential for encounters and hazards depending on the planet's inhabitants, technology, and overall profile. Moons, rings, and asteroid fields may offer navigational challenges to approaching ships. Communications and sensor satellites, debris, orbital facilities, and heavy starship traffic are typical features of settled worlds.

When approaching a busy world's orbital regions, vessels often receive requests for identification and intended destination from starport traffic control. Sensor satellites monitor traffic and navigational buoys guide incoming and

outgoing ships along established flight paths. Starfighter patrols enforce peace and protect vessels from pirates. Orbital industrial and military facilities might provide additional manufacturing potential and protection.

More remote worlds lack rigid control of their orbital regions, usually because the populace prefers a subtle, simple existence, expects visitors to fend for themselves, or wishes to avoid notice of authorities passing through the system. Astrographical features that drift into orbit (rings, asteroids, debris) go unchecked and unmarked, becoming hazards to unwary pilots.

Description

Although the planet itself dominates the orbit environment, other elements present hazards or potential encounters to in- and outbound vessels. Moons most frequently orbit worlds. The larger a planet, the greater its number of moons. For some immense yet uninhabited gas giants, one or several moons might offer an atmosphere conducive to settlement; for example, the moon Yavin IV harbored a Rebel base among the Massassi ruins. Even lifeless moons can host pressurized installations less suited for a planetary surface. Some moons break up or collide, creating orbital rings or asteroid belts.

Here are some ideas of typical encounters and other features near planetary orbit; they vary depending on the world's overall purpose, population, government, and technological sophistication.

Stardock: Vast orbital construction facilities provide docking gantries in which workers assemble immense starships. These frequently include landing bays for supply ships, and pressurized quarters to house laborers. Fondor and Wroona have starship construction installations in their orbits.

Factory: Some industrial facilities are too massive for the surface, so installations float in regular orbit where they have access to incoming supply vessels and freighters to export finished goods.

Starport: Commercial and military starports in orbit allow easier access for goods, ships, and passengers destined for a world and its moons. These facilities enable large ships to dock without time-consuming planetary landing and facilitate faster maintenance, service, and disembarking.

Debris: Wreckage from battles or starship collisions often settles into a stable orbit around a planet. Unless destroyed or salvaged by authorities, this debris becomes a hazard for vessels navigating the area.

Patrol: World, sector, and galactic governments sponsor patrols in some systems, usually to maintain peace, monitor starship traffic, and protect against threats like pirates. Larger entities sometimes deploy a massive fleet to blockade a planet for any number of reasons (economic, military, or political), halting or destroying outbound vessels and interdicting inbound craft for identity check and possible impound.

Pirates: Small fleets of brigands lurk near sparsely inhabited systems, hoping to prey on unsuspecting ships passing nearby. They avoid well-patrolled regions but use astrographical features and other elements in orbit to mask their presence.

Derelict: Wrecked or abandoned vessels settle into stable orbits around worlds, waiting for salvage teams to strip them or patrols to use them for target practice. Some planets

maintain entire fields of junked starships in orbit, charging for salvage rights and paying paltry credits for new additions.

Satellites: Densely inhabited worlds with sophisticated technology deploy small satellites in orbit to boost the effectiveness of ground-based communications and sensors. Nav-buoys help guide starship traffic. Comm-sats enhance planetside communications and serve as a transfer point for messages reaching outside the system. Sensor satellites monitor a world's weather and guard against approaching hostile forces.

Special Game Rules

Most inhabited systems clearly mark objects in orbit with signals easily read on starship sensors. If venturing into an orbital region with unmarked debris, a sensor operator can make a Computer Use check to detect it based on the object's size (see Table 11–5: Starship Sensor Detection in the revised core rulebook). If this check fails, the pilot finds his craft immediately on a collision course with the object. To dodge it at the last minute requires a Pilot check based on the object's size (reference the Asteroid Size Table above for object size and the DCs to avoid them). A successful check avoids a crash, but a failure inflicts damage based on the vessel's speed, asteroid size, and collision vector as detailed in Ramming and Collisions in Chapter 11 of the revised core rulebook.

For rules on navigating in a planetary orbit, see the "Asteroid Field" section above.

Adventure Hook

Orders from HQ: Take your patrol and monitor the space immediately around the planet. You must prevent enemy scouts from approaching and detecting our secret base here. Pay particular attention to the three uninhabited moons, the ancient debris field from some forgotten, destroyed fleet, and the asteroid belt farther out in the system. Your vessels pack enough firepower to confront other starfighters and put up a good fight against larger capital ships, but if it looks like you're losing ground, break out of orbit and make a hyperspace jump for the next system. If we're lucky, the enemy will just think you're a rogue patrol. If we're not, you might not have a base to return to later.

About the Authors

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