TRADER CAPTAINS

The trader captain, in her trusty freighter, is one of the most common science fiction archetypes. Picking up cargo from one place and selling at at a profit elsewhere is an occupation undertaken by the likes of Mal Reynolds, Han Solo, pilots of the *Elite* universe, and many more. This article brings you a simple trading system to use in your WOIN game, allowing you to easily run a campaign of space trading.

Trade is transported in Cargo Units. Every ship has its cargo capacity in CU noted. Traders will purchase cargo up to their cargo capacity, travel to another star system, and then sell the cargo at a profit. This article makes the following assumptions:

1. There's always a buyer somewhere on a planet.
2. The further away the destination, the higher the likely profit.
3. A megacredit is 1,000cr.

Certain cargo types sell a little better at certain destination types. For example, agricultural parts sell well at an agricultural world. For each cargo type, there may be one or more world types where a high profit might be made.

HOW MUCH PROFIT?

Calculating the profit is simple. Take the amount you spent on the cargo as the base, roll a CHA (*negotiating*) check to get the percentage profit you make.

However, your profit is capped by the distance you travel. Your maximum profit is 1% profit for each parsec you travel in an AL 9 setting, or each 100 parsecs in an AL 10 setting.

If the destination world is the type where your cargo sells particularly well, you make an additional 1d6% on top of this profit.

The Legality Code (see below) of your cargo can also affect your profits. You double your profit for restricted items, or triple it for illegal cargo.

CARGO TYPES

The table below lists various cargo types. Each is noted by name, price per Cargo Unit, which world types it sells well at, and a Legality Code.

Legality Codes are L for Legal, R for Restricted, and I for Illegal. Restricted and illegal cargo has potential for higher profits, but also carries additional risks.

The price in the table above indicates the cost per Cargo Unit.

Cargo	Price	Sells Well On	Legality
Agricultural Equipment	200	Agricultural	L
Alloys	300	Industrial	L
Antiques	2,500	-	L
Artwork	800	-	L
Computers	700	-	L
Crops	100	Desert	L
Cybernetics	1,400	Industrial	R
Explosives	800	Mining	R
Fabrics	200	-	L
Food	200	Colony	L
Industrial Machinery	400	Mining	L
Liquor	600	-	L
Livestock	800	Agricultural	R
Medicines	900	Mining, Colony	R
Narcotics	1,000	-	I
Precious Metals	1,500	Industrial	L
Raw Fuel	500	Mining	L
Slaves	1,200	Mining	I
Spices	900	Homeworld	R
Water	100	Desert	L
Weapons	2,000	-	R

RESTRICTED CARGO

Restricted cargo requires a permit. A permit allows you to transport up to a specific amount of a single cargo type, and costs 1,000cr per CU. The permit states what the cargo type and maximum amount is. Many traders have multiple permits for different cargo types. You only need to buy a permit once.

A permit is an investment against future profits.

Your *bureaucracy* skill is helpful when obtaining permits. Reduce the cost by 1% for each point in your CHA (*bureaucracy*) check.

Forgery is always an option. It's a LOG check (with the *forgery* skill) to forge a permit, opposed by the INT (*bureaucracy*) check of the customs official, who is typically a **functionary** rolling 5d6.

Permits can also make excellent rewards for completing governmental contracts.

ILLEGAL CARGO

You cannot get a permit for illegal cargo. If caught, the cargo will be confiscated and you will be fined or prosecuted.

If you are transporting illegal cargo, you are smuggling.

CUSTOMS

When arriving at a new planet or space station, you must go through Customs. There is a 1-in-6 chance that your cargo will be inspected. If it is not inspected,

you can smuggle restricted and illegal items in.

If your cargo is inspected and you have illegal cargo or you have restricted cargo without a valid permit, it is confiscated.

The first time, you will get away with mere confiscation. The second time, you will be fined an amount equal to the value of the cargo.

If you have exceeded your permit, your permit is revoked on the second offence.

OTHER COSTS

Don't forget your operating costs. These usually come in two forms:

1. *Fuel costs.* One unit of fuel buys you one parsec of travel, divided by your engine's fuel efficiency rating. Fuel costs 10cr per unit.
2. *Crew costs.* The monthly cost of a crew depends on the ship's crew requirement and the quality of the crew. A standard crew costs 200cr per crew member per month and rolls 4d6 for checks. In *The Cauldron* setting, you can hire Marmies for much less.

If you don't pay your crew costs, you can run into trouble. Crews won't desert at the first sign of trouble, but for each month they remain unpaid, the ship suffers a cumulative -1d6 to all checks. The penalty goes away once the accounts are settled.

You can reduce crew costs by 10% in a given month with a *Strenuous [21]* LOG (*accounting*) check. For more detail, the reduction is 1% for each point above 10 you roll.

Crew	Cost (cr)	Checks
Marmies	50	3d6
Poor	100	3d6
Standard	200	4d6
Experienced	300	5d6
Elite	500	66

You can hire better or worse crews, depending on your budget.

EXAMPLE

Our old friends in the *Murphy* are back! Let's start by looking at the ship's operating costs.

The *Murphy's* crew complement is 20. Deducting the six heroes, that leaves 14 hired crew. Sasha has hired a Marmie crew, so that costs 700cr per month.

The ship has an operational range of 112.5 parsecs. The hyperdrive has a fuel efficiency rating of 0.9, so the fuel costs are a little above average. Each parsec costs 11cr (it would cost 1,237.5cr to fill the *Murphy's* tank; as a side-note it would take the ship nearly 3 years to travel its entire operational range).

We also need the *Murphy's* cargo capacity, which is 161 Cargo Units.

The heroes pick up 50 CU of livestock, which costs 40,000cr. That's an expensive haul! Still, the more you spend, the greater the profit.

Travelling from Clarke's World to Ivvin Tor is an trip of 14 parsecs, with a fuel cost of 154cr. The FTL-4 hyperdrive (Sasha can push it to FTL-5) does a parsec in 9.52 days, so the trip is 133 days, or 2.2 months. That results in a crew cost of 1,540cr.

When they arrive at Ivvin Tor - eventually! - Sasha makes her CHA check. She rolls 16, but the 14-parsec trip caps it at 14. The crew makes 14% profit on the 40,000cr of livestock, or 5,600cr.

The overall profit, therefore, is 5,600 less the crew and fuel costs; that comes to 3,906cr. Not exactly a fortune, but they didn't fill up their cargo hold, and transported a safe, low-value cargo.

NOT MY CARGO!
Investing in expensive cargo can be an insurmountable hurdle to some traders. However, you can accept contracts to haul somebody else's cargo. The profit is nowhere near as good, but neither are the costs.

If you carry cargo for somebody else, you do not have to pay for it in advance. Your profit is still determined the same way - a CHA check, capped by the distance in parsecs - but you make one-third the profit. If the *Murphy* had been hauling somebody else's livestock to Ivvin Tor, they'd only have made 1,866cr profit (before fuel and crew deductions). Still, they wouldn't have had to find 40,000cr up front to purchase the cargo.

CREDIT
As described in *EONS #40: Reputation, Contacts, & Credit*, you might choose to use credit to purchase your cargo. 40,000cr is a REP check of 31, somewhat beyond any member of the *Murphy's* crew.

PIRACY
Ships carrying valuable cargo worth 10,000cr or more are vulnerable to piracy.

Roll 2d6 (add +1 for non-friendly space, and add +2 for dangerous space) and on a roll of 12 or more there is an encounter with pirates.

Cargo of less than 10,000cr is not typically seen as worth the risk for pirates.

Add another +1 to the 1d6 roll if the cargo is worth 100,000cr or more.

Friendly space	-
Hostile/unexplored space	+1
Dangerous space	+2
Cargo worth 100K	+1
Illegal cargo	+1

The GM should devise the pirate encounter, but it should be a moderately challenging encounter for the PCs. Pirates are good at assessing risks - the ones which attack will be the challenge-appropriate ones. Weaker pirates know better, and stronger pirates seek bigger prizes.

If pirates get too repetitive, you may choose a different complication (see *Special Cargo*, below)

SKILLS
Various skills are mentioned in this article and in the core rules. This is a quick summary of those useful for trading.

Negotiation helps the CHA check to determine your profit.

Accounting helps reduce crew costs.

Forgery can help forge permits for restricted goods.

Bureaucracy helps reduce the cost of permits.

Appraisal helps you to determine the value of a cargo in case somebody tries to cheat you.

Bribery might help you if discovered with an invalid permit or illegal goods.

And, of course, the actual flying of the ship (see NEW pg. 184) is helped by *engineering, astrogation, computers,* and sometimes *medicine.*

SPECIAL CARGO

Sometimes a special cargo can provide opportunity for greater profit. The GM should insert these opportunities from time to time. Examples include:

- Food to a famine-stricken world.
- Medicine to a plague world.
- Weapons to a warzone.
- Exotic food to an event.
- Antiques to a collector.

These opportunities allow a trader to double their normal profit. However, they always involve a complication of some kind. Examples include:

1. The normally legal cargo is considered illegal for this trip. Perhaps the plague world is quarantined, or the exotic food is outlawed.
2. Somebody wants to stop the cargo getting through and will gladly destroy the PCs' ship to do so.
3. Somebody wants the cargo. Rather than destroy the ship, they will attempt to board it and take the cargo.
4. The cargo is not what it seems. *Alien*, anybody?
5. Stowaways! You discover a number of stowaways in the cargo hold.
6. Mutiny! Your crew turns on you.

QUICK TRADER CHEATSHEET

This step-by-step guide will take you through the process we just described.

1. Buy some cargo. Make an INT (*appraisal*) check if you're worried someone might be cheating you.
2. Get any permits you need. Reduce the cost with a CHA (*bureaucracy*) check or try some forgery.
3. Determine the length of your journey in parsecs, and its duration.
4. Calculate your fuel cost (1 unit per parsec) and your crew cost.
5. Reduce your crew cost with a LOG (*accountancy*) check.
6. Make your journey. If your cargo is worth 10,000cr or more, roll 2d6 to see if you attract any pirates.
7. Upon arrival, roll 1d6 to see if Customs inspects your cargo.
8. When you reach your destination, roll a CHA (*negotiation*) check to see how much profit you make. Remember it's capped by the number of parsecs you travelled.
9. Deduct your fuel and crew costs from your profit.

You can use the chart to the right to record vital information.

VESSEL	
Ship Name	
Cargo Capacity	
Passengers	
Range	
Fuel Efficiency	
Fuel Cost/Parsec	
Crew	
Crew Cost/Month	
FTL Speed	
Time/Parsec	

SKILLS	
INT (*appraisal*)	
CHA (*bureaucracy*)	
LOG (*accounting*)	
CHA (*negotiation*)	
LOG (*forgery*)	

PERMITS	

CAPTAIN WRIGLEY'S STARSHIP EMPORIUM!

Model	Cargo	Crew/Psgr	FTL	Our Price!
Silverado Class II Yacht	89.6	4/2	4	182.6
Persephone Class III Freighter	211.9	6/0	4	232.4
Firebug Class II Transport	89.0	4/4	2.5	245.1
Ziegel Class IV Freighter	334.7	11/0	3	261.2
Caliko Class II Freighter	15.4	4/2	5	355.2
Quicksilver Class II Yacht	97.0	4/0	8	628.5
Rapide Class IV Liner	0.6	11/60	5	658.7
Hermes Class II Courier	65.8	4/0	9	704.8
Rover Class III Scout	152.2	6/0	6	716.7
Advent Class III Freighter	189.2	6/0	8	719.2
Century Class III Freighter	19.1	6/4	4	813.9
Korrin Class III Freighter	117.6	6/4	5	907.0
Karnikov Class IV Freighter	76.6	11/0	4	1031.7
Semaphore Class III Transport	51.6	6/20	2	1134.4
Selkirk Class V Freighter	389.5	19/20	5	1152.5

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