

A Quick WOIN Starship Combat Primer

This document is intended to clarify starship combat. Starship combat has been subject to some errata, and some FAQ clarifications, which this document summarizes. This document supersedes any other source of starship combat information, and includes a slightly modified play sequence.

Most of the information in the N.E.W. core rulebook does not need clarification. This document mainly addresses the turn order and PC actions. It also covers some of the decisions the GM needs to make regarding the system's complexity - cyclic or re-rolled INITIATIVE, simple or Newtonian movement (and if the latter, simple or detailed turning circles), simple or Newtonian turn order, and simple turns or combat phases. These tools, like many others in WOIN, allow the GM to turn the complexity dial to the level of tactical realism vs. speed of play that is preferred.

You will need a copy of N.E.W. The Science Fiction Roleplaying Game to understand this document. This document assumes you are using a hex grid and miniatures or counters.

Checklist - choose one from each row.

| More simple/faster | More tactical/slower |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cyclic INITIATIVE | Reroll each round |
| Simple movement | Newtonian movement |
| Simple turning circles | Detailed turning circles |
| Simple turns | Combat phases |

Nobody is “assigned” a set role in starship combat. Anybody can attempt anything!

Crew Positions

The rules assume that anybody can perform any task. Each character gets one action per turn, but it is assumed that the character can choose to move to another console or control if necessary. **In other words, PCs are not “assigned” a set role such as engineer, medic, gunner, etc. - they can do anything they like on their turn.**

However, any given system may only be used once per round.

If INITIATIVE is cyclic (see below) that count is from when a system was last used. If it is rolled each round, then each system can only be used once in between INITIATIVE rolls. Sure, canny players might do something at the end of the round, and then again at the beginning of the next. That’s OK.

This includes the pilot - different characters can be pilot from round to round although remember that the piloting system can only be used once per round, just like any other.

Because these positions aren’t fully assigned, you might have a pilot and a co-pilot in the cockpit of a small freighter. In one round the pilot is performing a maneuver while the co-pilot adjusts the shield facings; the next round, the co-pilot is performing a maneuver while the pilot uses the sensors. “Pilot” and “co-pilot” may be roles assigned in-game, but they have no mechanical meaning; remember that anybody can do anything.

List of Actions

The following is a list of example actions. Remember that anybody can perform any action, but any given system can only be used once. Also remember that this is just an example list - on a character’s turn, they can do *anything they wish*.

Most of these actions are described in the *N.E.W.* core rulebook. Those that are not are described in this document (denoted

Errata

The following errata is found in the official *N.E.W.* errata document, and is repeated here for convenience.

Starship Actions (p. 195). NPC and GM-controlled ships get one action per class. Player-crewed ships get one action per PC or one action per class, whichever is higher. All PCs get to take an action. If the ship class is higher than the number of PCs, the crew takes the remaining actions.

PCs each roll their own INITIATIVE. GM-controlled ships typically just roll once. The starship’s movement INITIATIVE is rolled by the pilot.

Repairing Starship Damage (p. 196). SS repaired during combat is temporary emergency repairs and only lasts one day.

Permanent repairs require one hour per SS for each point above 50% normal, and one day per SS for each point below 50% and cost 0.5 MCr per point.

Restoring Casualties (p. 196). A failed check to restore a crewmember to duty means that the casualty becomes permanent. Permanent losses must be replaced at an appropriate location.

with an asterisk). Feel free to add to this list.

- Perform a maneuver
- Fire one weapon
- Make an electronic attack
- Jam communications*
- Ask a sensors question
- Repair SS (multiple PCs can do this)
- Repair CPU
- Redirect shield power*
- Heal a PC
- Restore casualties
- Launch a shuttle or fighter squadron

Here’s the thing to remember: there is no definitive list of actions. You can add to this list with anything you can think of!

- Use a tractor beam
- Act as spotter*
- Use buffing exploits on PCs
- Use psionic powers
- Activate or deactivate a cloaking device
- Use some special equipment
- Use any other exploit

Initiative

The important thing to remember in starship combat is that **every PC gets to take an action**.

At the start of a starship combat, roll INITIATIVE just like you would in any other combat situation. The PCs act in that order, just like normal. Roll once for each enemy ship - GM controlled ships take all actions on one INITIATIVE count for speed of play.

You might need to roll INITIATIVE for the PC ship's crew if the ship class is larger than the number of PCs and the crew is needed to fill out the number of actions.

Remember that *starship tactics* is used, not *tactics*. And the ship itself might have an INITIATIVE adjustment based on its class.

Go through the INITIATIVE order just like normal. The ship moves on the pilot's INITIATIVE count.

Remember that the ship movement is essentially free - that doesn't constitute the pilot's action for the turn. The pilot may still take an action (which might be a maneuver-based exploit, or it might be firing a weapon, or something similar).

Any character can do anything on their INITIATIVE turn. They can fire a weapon, use sensors, do some engineering, take photos of the enemy ships with an old polaroid camera, etc. The only restriction is that any given system (such as a weapon) can only be used once per turn.

For GM controlled ships with a single INITIATIVE count, the movement takes place before any actions.

It's up to you whether INITIATIVE is cyclic, or whether you re-roll it each round. The former is much faster. The latter is more realistic, as it gives smaller ships a constant INITIATIVE advantage, rather than just an advantage in the first round. It does slow down play slightly, though, so if you are using a lot of ships or players, it might be worth sticking to cyclic INITIATIVE.

In Short...

Every PC rolls INITIATIVE and each can take *any action* on their turn as long as no system is used twice a round. If the ship class exceeds the number of players, the crew gets to take the remaining actions.

GM-controlled ships just roll once and have a number of actions equal to their class, all of which take place on the ship's INITIATIVE count.

Movement

If you are using simple movement, the ship simply moves up to its SPEED; turning one hex-side counts as one point of movement.

If you are using Newtonian movement, the pilot must change SPEED **at the start of his turn**.

The ship moves on the pilot's INITIATIVE (but that movement does not constitute the pilot's action for the turn). The ship moves before the pilot takes any actions.

The turning circle is easier to calculate than it sounds. $SPEED \times CLASS$, divided by 10 (you just multiply the two and then use the first digit). You just have to move that many hexes before turning a hex side; the straight line **can overlap turns**.

If you want a simpler turning circle rule, simply use half of the largest of SPEED or CLASS, and is measured **only from the start of the turn**.

Note that a ship at SPEED 0 can still rotate one hex side for free.

The important thing to remember is that every PC gets an action! Let the player be inventive when trying to contribute to the combat.

Positioning

Remember that forward firing weapons gain +1d6, aft firing weapons suffer -1d6, rear attacks gain +1d6, and stationary targets gain +1d6. These combine to keep ships moving, and keep them attempting to get behind each other.

Sample Turn

This is what a turn might look like. Two fighters and a small frigate are attacking the *Murphy*.

| INITIATIVE | Action |
|------------|--|
| 20 | Enemy fighter #1 moves and fires. |
| 18 | Enemy fighter #2 moves and fires. |
| 17 | Holmes uses the sensors to establish how much damage the frigate has taken. |
| 16 | Gorrat fires one of the <i>Murphy</i> 's pulse blasters at fighter #2. |
| 14 | The <i>Murphy</i> accelerates to SPEED 8 and moves; and Sasha fires the other pulse blaster. |
| 13 | The frigate moves then fires an ion cannon and launches a boarding shuttle. |
| 11 | Dr. TikTok gets some casualties back on their feet. |
| 10 | Talik fires the <i>Murphy</i> 's torpedo at the frigate. |

Can I Do This?

Players will likely ask "can I do this?" when in starship combat. The answer should always be "yes". Or at least, they can try.

Starship combat with multiple players on one ship can be tedious for PCs without much to do. That's why this system doesn't assign players to specific roles, moves through the turn rapidly, and lets each player do anything they wish on their turn. Players should be encouraged to come up with ingenious and creative

Advanced Rules

The following rules allow for a more tactically complex experience at the cost of slowing down play. They are optional.

Newtonian round order. On pg. 203 of *N.E.W.*, the Newtonian round order is mentioned. Ships move in reverse INITIATIVE order (starting with the losing ship) and then act in forward INITIATIVE order. That way of doing it slows gameplay a little, but it does make for a more tactically complex experience.

If you are doing this, you need to re-roll INITIATIVE each round. It *cannot* be used in conjunction with cyclic INITIATIVE.

Combat phases. Also mentioned on pg. 203 of *N.E.W.* are combat phases. This slows things down a lot more, but makes it more of a tactical wargame. If you have multiple players each playing one ship, this option is worth considering. With multiple players on one ship vs. a GM controlling several ships, the payoff probably isn't worth it.

things to do, and the GM should endeavour to facilitate them.

Remember that PCs have access to a range of starship combat exploits, also - things from maneuvers like the Wingover to the ability to target specific systems on a ship.

Third party publishers and fans are encouraged to suggest new actions that can be undertaken during starship combat. The more possible actions, more fun and varied starship combat will be!

Spotter

Even if a PC can think of no other useful task, any PC can act as a spotter. A spotter calls out targets to the gunners. The spotter makes *perception* checks vs. the target's DEFENSE, and if successful all allies aboard the ship gain +1d6 to hit that target until the beginning of the spotter's next turn.

The Target Engines Exploit

The Target Engines exploit in the N.E.W. core rulebook allows a gunner to take a -1d6 penalty to hit the engines, with the damage being applied to the engine power (thus reducing its SPEED).

As described in EONS #10, This exploit also allows the gunner to target the other subsystems. A successful hit on a subsystem has the following effects.

Engines. Targeting the engines directly applies the damage to the engines' available power. This effectively reduces the vessel's SPEED score (which is derived by dividing engine power by ship class).

Shields. Targeting a shield generator can take it offline. Like engines, damage to a shield generator directly reduces the available power to shields, effectively reducing its SOAK score.

Weapons. Weapons are targeted individually. A weapon has an SS score equal to the ship's class. If this is reduced to zero, the weapon is knocked offline.

Other systems. Other systems are treated like weapons - they have an SS score equal to the ship's class.

Diverting Shield Power

Allow the PCs to spend an action diverting shield power. Somebody should be trying to ensure that the shields facing the multiple moving enemies are strengthened.

There are four shield arcs (forward, port, starboard, aft). The *Seeker's* shields, for example, offer SOAK 5 in each direction. A PC can divert power from any given shield to another, but cannot more than double the total power to a given shield.

The easiest way to do this is to assume the SOAK 5 is a total pool of 20 shield points (four arcs). Any given arc can have up to 10 points in it.

Shield realignment, like other onboard systems, can only be done once per turn.

Escaping to FTL

FTL drives in WOIN have a "spool time" - the time it takes to engage FTL. This is

| | |
|----|---|
| 3 | Weapons |
| 4 | SUB-L engines (cannot change speed or, if using simple movement, cannot move) |
| 5 | Shields or point defenses |
| 6 | Casualties (equal to half damage done) |
| 7 | Double SS damage or CPU |
| 8 | Sensors |
| 9 | Comms |
| 10 | Helm (cannot turn) |
| 11 | Sickbay (cannot restore casualties) |
| 12 | Cargo (units equal to half damage) |
| 13 | Double SS damage |
| 14 | Shuttlebay |
| 15 | Tractor beam |
| 16 | Casualties (equal to half damage done) |
| 17 | FTL engines (cannot go to FTL) |
| 18 | Computer |

equal to the ship's class in rounds. During that time, the ship must remain on a straight vector (or remain stationary) and cannot turn or alter its velocity.

Jamming Comms

You might choose to jam a target ship's communications. Make an electronic attack vs. the target's e-DEFENSE. If you are successful, the target ship's comms are jammed until the start of your next turn.

Critical Hits

Critical hits can be scored with weapon attacks and with electronic attacks.

If a critical hit is scored on an attack roll, roll 3d6 to determine the effect (see the above table). If a system is disabled, it requires a repair roll equal to the attack roll. Note the attack roll when recording a critical hit.

A critical hit from a regular weapon does physical damage to the target system. A critical hit from an ion weapon or hacking attack shuts down a system.

If a system is hit twice, it is destroyed.

If the location does not exist, use the next one down.

Running the Combat

One important thing to remember is that a starship combat which just involves shooting at each other until one side or the other explodes is fairly boring. Sure, you can do that occasionally (and the sample encounter in this document does exactly that for the sake of simplicity) but you should generally try to think of other goals. Perhaps there's a macguffin on an asteroid. The PCs need to fly through the asteroid field, send down a shuttle, retrieve the macguffin, fly out of the asteroid field, and engage FTL, while the bad guys try to stop them. The point here is that the goal of the encounter is something other than the starship combat itself.

This might be the single most important thing to take away from this FAQ.

Things To Remember

The following are small things to remember in starship combat. They make a difference!

- To use sensors, make a check vs. the target's DEFENSE and ask a question. Remember the range increment.
- Repairing SS in combat is temporary. It only lasts a day. You will need to find a shipyard and spend some money (0.5MCr/SS).
- Electronic attacks do 1d6 damage to the target's CPU capacity. When CPU reaches zero, the ship shuts down.
- Use LOGIC for missiles and INT for guns.
- Shields have half SOAK vs. ion weapons, which do damage to CPU not SS.
- Energy weapons lose 1d6 damage per range increment.

- Each time a shield is penetrated, its SOAK goes down by 1.
- Roll for casualties if the ship takes 5 or more damage.
- A "dead" ship forms a fast (4-6) countdown pool equal to its class.
- The sickbay capacity tells you how many casualties it can restore per day. If you can't restore the, they're dead, Jim!
- Energy weapons lose 1d6 damage per range increment.
- Missiles and torpedoes cost 1/20th (5%) the cost of the launcher.
- Sensors can use a range of skills, depending on what you're scanning for.
- Remember that a comfortable ship (LUX 151%-199%) gets +1d6 to all checks. Ships with decadent and poor LUX scores suffer penalties.

PIRATE ENCOUNTER

In this section of the document, a sample encounter is presented, along with ship stats and advice on how to run it.

This article assumes that your PCs are in a mid-sized, reasonably well-armed ship such as the *Murphy*, Seeker Class V scout from the core rulebook (*N.E.W.* pg 204). The ships below are significantly weaker than the *Murphy*, and are chosen to be used in a small groups of 3 attackers. They are also designed to be simple to run so that the GM can concentrate on running multiple ships while the PCs run one ship.

Set up an asteroid field on the starmap. Make sure there are 2-3 dozen asteroids scattered across the map, so that ships will tend to have to turn frequently. Place the *Murphy* in the center of the map at zero velocity (stationary) and have the 3 enemy ships converge from different corners of the map:

- 1 *Scavenger* Class III Assault Craft
- 1 *Rangefinder* Class II Patrol Craft
- 1 *Intruder* Class IV Transport

All of these ships are smaller than the *Murphy* - the *Scavenger* and *Rangefinder* considerably so. Being attacked by multiple smaller ships is a different type of encounter to being attacked by a single equal-sized ship, and results in a lot more movement.

Each of the pirate ships is run by the GM, who will roll INITIATIVE once for each ship and **assign it a 4d6 roll** for any given die roll. The PCs, on the other hand, will

each roll their own INITIATIVE. The PCs and the pirate ships then all act in order.

The pirate ships have between two and four actions available each, plus movement.

You can increase the difficulty by either improving the pirate crews to 5d6, or by adding a fourth ship. You should not use more than one *Intruder* class ship vs. the *Murphy*, because the ion cannon will take down the *Murphy*'s CPU capacity of 12 very quickly. Remember that shields offer only half SOAK against ion damage, and that damage is applied directly to CPU, not to SS.

Start the encounters at distance, to allow for some maneuvering. A distance of 30km or so (30 hexes) is about right. The *Scavenger* will need to get in close with its 2km weapon range increment.

The *Intruder* can launch its shuttle with an action. The shuttle has a SPEED of 3 and when adjacent to a target can insert a boarding party of 6 **pirates** onto the PC ship. The *Intruder*'s sensors get a +1d6 bonus.

The *Scavenger* ship's pulse lasers are banked, meaning it can fire them both with one action (and one attack roll).

The *Rangefinder*'s concussion missile gets +1d6 to attack, as do its sensors.

SCAVENGER CLASS III ASSAULT CRAFT

These old assault craft are often purchased and repaired by pirates. A pair of forward-firing pulse lasers provide the vessel's offensive power, and three mid-range shield generators are able to absorb many weaker attacks.

Weight 17,600 tons; **Cargo Units** 250 (185.0 available; capacity 9,250.0 tons)

Hull Class III (INIT 0)

Traits -

Crew 6 (cost 1200cr/m); **Troops** 0;

Passengers 0 (0 standard, 0 luxury)

Command & Control Systems

Computers 1x Chemerkin-Liang Products LM-2 Command Computer (CPU cycles 20; max FTL 5; checks: +0d6)

Sensors Chen-Collins SS-1 (range 2; check +0d6)

Engine & Propulsion Data

Subluminal 1x Star Corporation SF-2 Fusion Reactor (power 19 ; SPEED 6.3; fuel efficiency 1.2)

FTL 1x White AgriSpace MA-1 Antimatter Engine (power 15 ; FTL 5.0; fuel efficiency 1)

Operational Range 27 parsecs

Defensive Data

Superstructure 9

DEFENSE 18 **E-DEFENSE** 10

Shields 3x Tyler Mechanics SSM-1 Combat Shield System (power 5 ea; SOAK 5)

Weapons Data

2x Narita Maltech SLP-1 Blackbuster Pulse Laser (2f banked; range 2; damage 2d6 heat; attack +0d6)

Facilities

Luxury 133% (Adequate: -)

Facilities Messhall (4), Sickbay (1), Galley (1)

Market Value 220 MCr

RANGEFINDER CLASS II PATROL CRAFT

Small, and reasonably fast, these vessels stay at range and attack using their torpedoes. They can be used to harry and confuse their prey, and work well in groups which spread out to attack from all sides.

Weight 8,007 tons; **Cargo Units** 150 (104.9 available; capacity 5,245.0 tons)

Hull Class II (INIT 0)

Traits Evasive, Inspector

Crew 4 (cost 800cr/m); **Troops** 0;

Passengers 0 (0 standard, 0 luxury)

Command & Control Systems

Computers 1x Frontier Products MM-2 Command Computer (CPU cycles 12; max FTL 3; checks: +0d6)

Sensors Chen-Collins SS-2H (range 8; check +1d6)

Engine & Propulsion Data

Subluminal 1x Star Corporation SF-2 Fusion Reactor (power 19 ; SPEED 9.5; fuel efficiency 1.2)

FTL 1x Cui-Green Alliance SH-1 Hyperdrive (power 4; FTL 2.0; fuel efficiency 0.8)

Operational Range 6 parsecs

Defensive Data

Superstructure 6

DEFENSE 22 **E-DEFENSE** 10

Shields 2x Tyler Mechanics SSM-1 Combat Shield System (power 5 ea; SOAK 5)

Weapons Data

1x Waywatch Lines MCPx-1 Redswarm Proximity Concussion Missile (1f; range 7; damage 2d6 ballistic; attack +1d6)

Facilities

Luxury 125% (Adequate: -)

Facilities Messhall (3), Medstation (1), Galley (1)

Market Value 369 MCr

INTRUDER CLASS IV TRANSPORT

Slightly larger than the other ships here, this vessel carries a small contingent of troops ready to board a disabled ship. Its ion weaponry is specifically designed to disable a target without destroying it. It boasts a tractor beam capable of holding ships of up to Class VI, and a single boarding shuttle. It can be operated by 1 crew member.

Weight 37,975 tons; **Cargo Units** 400 (54.0 available; capacity 2,700.0 tons)

Hull Class IV (INIT 0)

Traits Skeleton Crew

Crew 1 (cost 200cr/m); **Troops** 6;

Passengers 0 (0 standard, 0 luxury)

Command & Control Systems

Computers 1x Frontier Products MM-3
Command Computer (CPU cycles: 16; max
FTL 4; checks +0d6)

Sensors Chen-Collins SS-2H (range 8; check
+1d6)

Engine & Propulsion Data

Subluminal 2x Star Corporation SF-1 Fusion
Reactor (power 12 ea; SPEED 6.0; fuel
efficiency 1.2)

FTL 1x Newdyne Concepts LA-1 Antimatter
Engine (power 20 ; FTL 4.0; fuel efficiency
1)

Operational Range 64 parsecs

Defensive Data

Superstructure 30

DEFENSE 19 **E-DEFENSE** 10

Armor 18x reactive (SOAK 5 ballistic, 7
energy)

Weapons Data

1x Southtech Heavy Weapons LIC-1 Bigstreak
Ion Cannon (range 7; damage 3d6 ion;
attack +0d6)

Facilities

Luxury 112% (Adequate: -)

Facilities Brig (2), Galley (3), Messhall (6),
Sickbay (3)

General Systems

Tractor Beams 1x Warp Sun Metallurgy G75
Tractor/Pressor System,

Hangars & Bays

Shuttles 1 (1x Parsec Systems ZM2 Single
Shuttle Bay)

Market Value 1,242.6 MCr