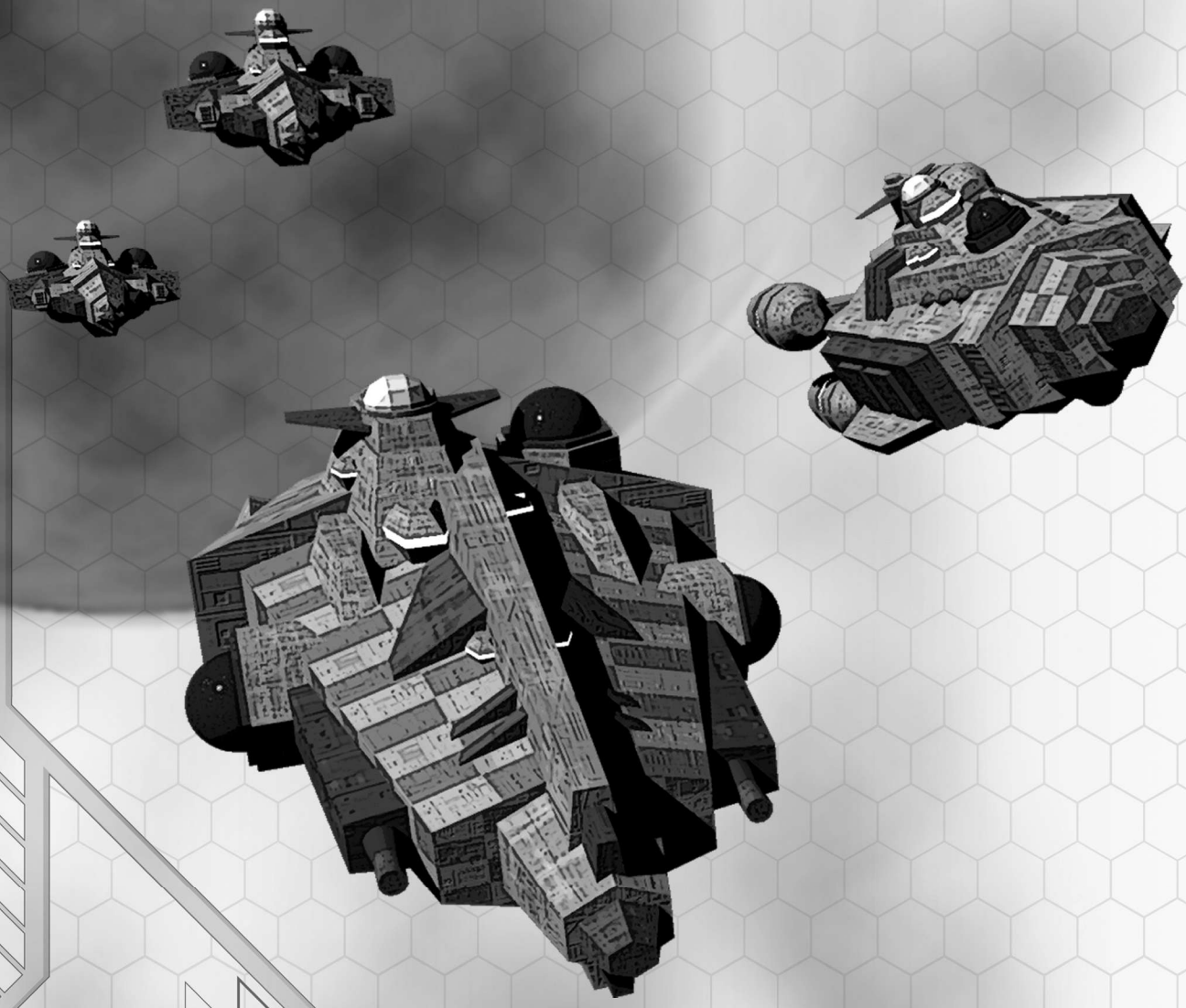
STARMADA

THE UNIVERSAL GAME OF STARSHIP COMBAT



CADET'S MANUAL

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STARMADA
MMXXIV

GAME DESIGN
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Starmada Cadet's Manual

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Sample SSD images (p.28) modified from artwork by MillionthVector (http://millionthvector.blogspot.com/p/free-sprites.html) and licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

A INTRODUCTION

Starmada™ is a tabletop game of starship combat. At its most basic level, players take command of space fleets in a general attempt to reduce each other to just so much space junk. At its most advanced, the game can breathe life into any science fiction background players might imagine.

Novices shouldn't fret; the core rules have been designed with ease of play in mind, accessible even to beginners. On the other hand, seasoned veterans should find the concise nature of the rules quite refreshing. **Starmada** allows players to concentrate on the finer points of squashing their opponent rather than arguing over rules interpretations, without sacrificing any of the flavor or excitement of more complex games.

Simple, but not simplistic, is the guiding principle.

Take some time now to look over the rules, then find an opponent, cue up your favorite sci-fi soundtrack, and lead your **Starmada** to victory!

> This book contains a fully playable subset of the **Starmada** rules, intended as an introduction to the game for new players. Once you are familiar with the general concepts and are ready to expand your games, check out the **Starmada Core Rulebook**!

A1 GAME COMPONENTS

In addition to the items listed below, players will need pens or pencils and some six-sided dice.

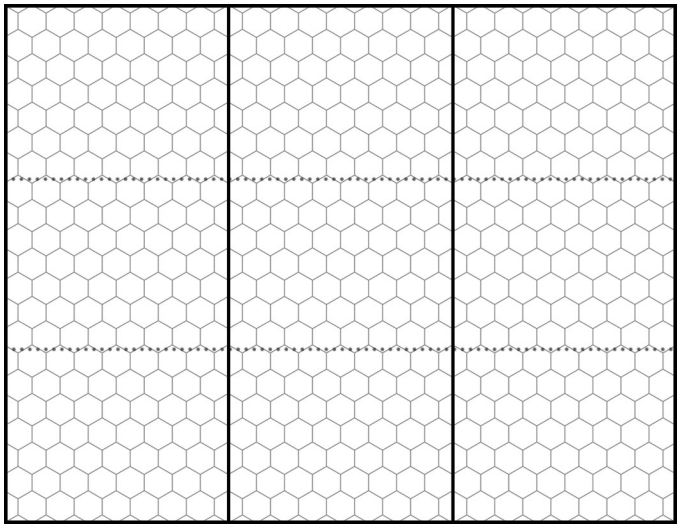
Digital versions of the game board, counters, markers, sample starship status displays, and other useful forms and charts can be obtained from our web site:

mj12.games/starmada/mjg0159-components.zip

A1.1 Game Board

The game is played on a board representing the void of space, overlaid with a hexagonal grid to regulate movement and distances. The game board consists of three 25.5"×11" panels aligned lengthwise, as shown below. The full playing area is 24 hexes across and 21 hexes wide.

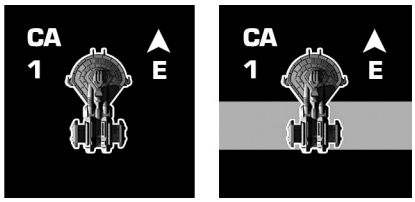
One edge of each map panel features a hex with sides labeled 1 through 6, while the opposite edge of each map panel features a hex with sides labeled A through F.



Instructions for assembling the digital game board can be found on p.27.

A1.2 Starship Counters

Combat elements (i.e., starships and fighter flights) are represented on the game board by 1" (25mm) square die-cut counters. Counters are double-sided: one side has a solid black background, while the reverse has a light grey stripe running through it. At the start of the game, each counter is placed on the game board so the side without the grey stripe is facing up.



The artwork on the counters is taken from the excellent designs of Todd Pote, who has an ever-growing collection of 3d-printable fleets available for purchase via his Cults 3D page:

cults3d.com/en/users/Go0gleplex/creations

In addition to an illustration of the starship in the center, each counter has the following information printed on it:

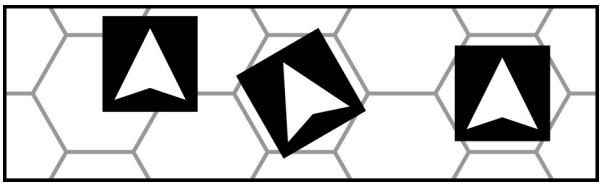
- A starship's type is reflective of its relative strength and/or the role it plays within a fleet. Abbreviations include:

  DN=Dreadnought
  BC=Battlecruiser
  CL=Light Cruiser
  FF=Frigate
  VF=Fighter Flight
  BB=Battleship
  CA=Heavy Cruiser
  DD=Destroyer
  CV=Carrier

- The starship ID# serves to link each counter to a specific ship status display (SSD; see below).
- The small arrow at top right indicates the starship's heading, or current direction of travel (p.8).
- The fleet ID helps differentiate friend from foe on the game board: e.g., all starships with an "E" fleet ID are on the same side.

Instructions for assembling the digital counters are provided on p.27.

When placed on the game board, each counter (or miniature) must fully occupy a single hex, and its directional arrow must clearly point towards one of the six sides of its hex.



In the example above, only the counter on the right has been placed correctly. The counter on the left occupies two hexes simultaneously, while the counter in the middle is pointing towards a hex corner, not a hex side.

A1.3 Starship Status Displays

Starship status displays (SSDs) are used to track the capabilities of each ship in the game. Each fits on a half sheet of letter-sized (8.5"×11") paper.

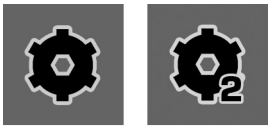
To get you playing right away, 14 sample starships are provided starting on p.28. Alternatively, you can create your own (p.21).

A1.4 Markers

Some rules require the use of markers; these differ from counters in that they do not represent combat elements, such as starships or fighter flights. Instead, they are used for various administrative purposes.

In the **Cadet's Manual**, the only markers required are for the use of Mines (p.17).

Mine markers are double-sided. One side represents a single Mine; the reverse represents between two and four Mines.



Three sets of Mine markers are included: red, blue, and grey. Each side uses a separate color.

A2 THE STARSHIP STATUS DISPLAY

This section explains the information provided on each starship status display (SSD).

A2.1 Class Information

Most starships are not unique designs but conform to a blueprint shared with one or more "sisters." This is referred to as the ship's class. The very top of the SSD lists the class followed by the ship's type: e.g., dreadnought, light cruiser, etc.

Beneath the starship's class is a space to write the ID# of the counter representing the ship on the game board. Players may also wish to write a unique name in this space (e.g., "CA #1 – *Enterprise*.")

Following the starship's type is its combat rating: a quantification of its overall effectiveness. Two forces with similar combat rating totals should be evenly balanced and provide an entertaining matchup.

The SSD on the facing page is for a Sycamore-class heavy cruiser. This design has a combat rating of 111.

A2.2 Starship Defenses

Each SSD contains a top-down illustration of the starship surrounded by four defensive facings (p.12). Most ships will have Screens (p.16) and/or Shields (p.17) in one or more of these arcs.

Sycamore has two Screens in each of the four defensive facings. She has no Shields.

A2.3 Damage Tracks

To the right of the starship's defenses is a set of four tracks used to record damage suffered by the ship (p.13). The length of each damage track is equal to the ship's hull size.

Sycamore is hull size 8: thus, each of her damage tracks is eight boxes long.

A2.4 Movement Orders

The next section of the SSD consists of eight boxes used to record the starship's movement orders in each game turn (p.8).

A2.5 Weapons

A starship may possess up to five groups of weapons, or batteries. For each battery, the SSD lists the weapons' name and loss limit (p.14), along with their rate of fire (ROF), accuracy (ACC), and damage (DMG) at each of up to five range bands (p.13). Any traits possessed by the weapons are shown to the right of these values (p.14).

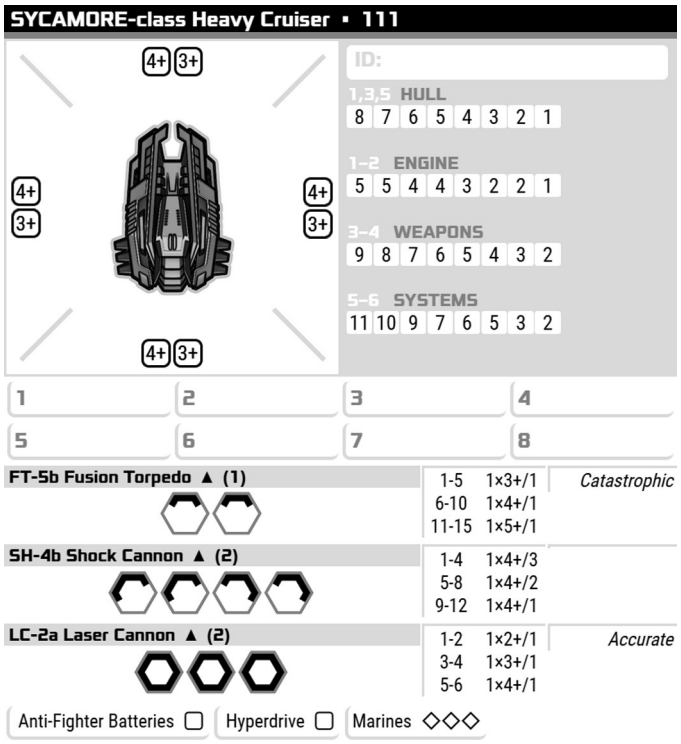
Below the weapon name are one or more firing arc diagrams, indicating the directions in which the weapons may be brought to bear (p.11).

Sycamore has a battery of four SH-4b Shock Cannons: two firing into the [ABC] arc, and two into the [ABD] arc.

The SH-4b has three range bands: 1-4, 5-8, and 9-12 hexes. It has ROF 1 and ACC 4+ in each band. The weapon's DMG is 3 in the first range band, 2 in the second, and 1 in the third.

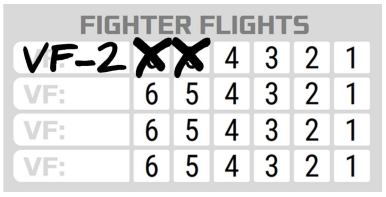
A2.6 Starship Systems

The bottom section of the SSD shows any systems possessed by the starship (p.16), divided into three categories: equipment, munitions, and traits. Equipment is listed first, with checkboxes to indicate when each system has been damaged (p.14). Munitions follow equipment: the diamonds are crossed off as the items are used. Traits are listed below munitions.



Sycamore possesses two items of equipment, in addition to her Screens: Anti-Fighter Batteries and Hyperdrive. She carries three squads of Marines. Sycamore has no traits.

If the starship carries fighters (p.19) a set of flight records is printed on its SSD to the right of the ship's systems. As each flight is launched, write its counter ID# in the given space. The six boxes are crossed off as the flight takes damage.



In the above example, a starship carrying four fighter flights has launched one, represented by counter VF-2. The flight has lost two fighters, leaving four remaining.

B PLAYING THE GAME

This section provides an overview of gameplay; details can be found in the following sections. After a few games, players should be able to dispense with the rulebook entirely. Every effort has been made to keep the process as intuitive as possible.

Questions? Please reach out by joining one (or all) of our online communities:

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B1 SETTING UP

The first step in playing a game is to find an opponent. Arrange the game board on a flat, level surface within easy reach of both sides and make sure all necessary game components are available.

B1.1 Choose a Scenario

A "scenario" sets the context of the game by defining the forces doing battle, the objectives on either side, and any special conditions or rules in effect. The default scenario represents a battle between two evenly-matched forces fighting for no purpose other than the sheer pleasure of watching enemy starships go "Boom!"

Players select a scenario size from the table below. The size determines both the scenario's fleet limit and victory point (VP) target.

SCENARIO SIZE	FLEET LIMIT	VP TARGET
Very Small	300	180
Small	450	270
Medium	600	360
Large	800	480
Very Large	1000	600

In each scenario, one side is designated Red and the other Blue. In the default scenario, there is no discernable difference between the two sides; they may be assigned in whatever way seems appropriate.

B1.2 Assemble the Fleet

The specific mix of starships making up each force is left to the players. However, the total combat rating of all ships selected cannot exceed the fleet limit of the chosen scenario.

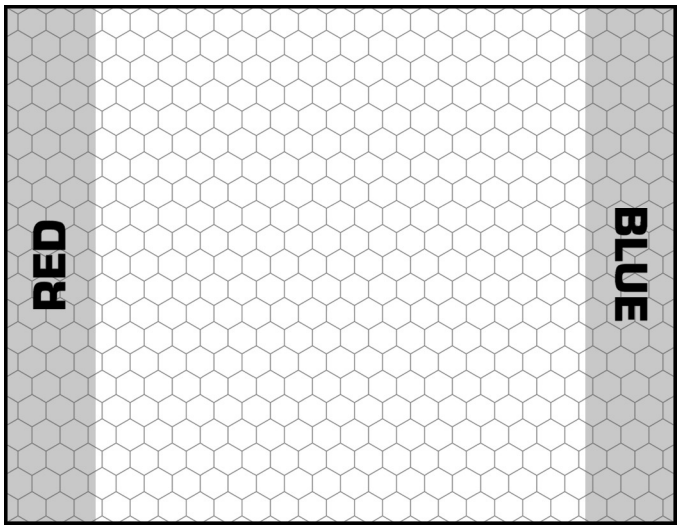
For example, a fleet limit of 600 allows players to select one starship with a combat rating of 300 and two ships with combat ratings of 150 each, six ships with combat ratings of 100 each, a single ship with a combat rating of 600, or any other combination adding up to 600 or less.

Next, obtain an SSD for each chosen starship. Players are given permission to make copies of published sheets for personal use: alternatively, the necessary information can be written onto copies of the blank SSD sheet (p.42).

B1.3 Deploy the Fleet

Finally, gather the necessary counters and place them on the game board according to the chosen scenario. Remember to place them so the side without the grey stripe is facing up.

Red deploys first, followed by Blue, in the areas shown below:



It is not feasible to provide counters for every possible starship type and/or class. Instead, players should choose counters that reasonably match the ships under their control. For example, two heavy cruisers and a single strike cruiser could be represented by three "CA" counters, with one of them standing in for the strike cruiser. All counters representing a side's ships should have the same fleet ID.

B2 SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The game is played in a series of game turns, each of which is made up of five distinct parts, or phases. The order in which these phases are conducted is referred to as the sequence of play. When all five phases have been completed, one game turn is over, and the next begins with the Orders Phase.

Each phase requires players to perform specific tasks, thus bringing some semblance of order to the chaos of battle. These tasks must be completed during the indicated phase and may not be performed in another. For example, if a player forgets to make attacks with a starship during the Combat Phase, the opportunity is lost and cannot be recovered during the End Phase.

B2.1 Orders Phase

During the Orders Phase sides simultaneously record movement orders for their starships as described in rule C1 (p.8). The thrust requirement of each ship's movement orders is compared to its engine rating to ensure those orders are valid (rule C2, p.9).

B2.2 Movement Phase

During the Movement Phase sides simultaneously move their starships across the game board, as described in rule C3 (p.9).

B2.3 Fighter Phase

During the Fighter Phase sides alternate activating individual fighter flights, as described in rule F2 (p.19). If no fighter flights are present, this phase can be skipped.

B2.4 Combat Phase

During the Combat Phase sides alternate making attacks with their starships, as described in rule D (p.11).

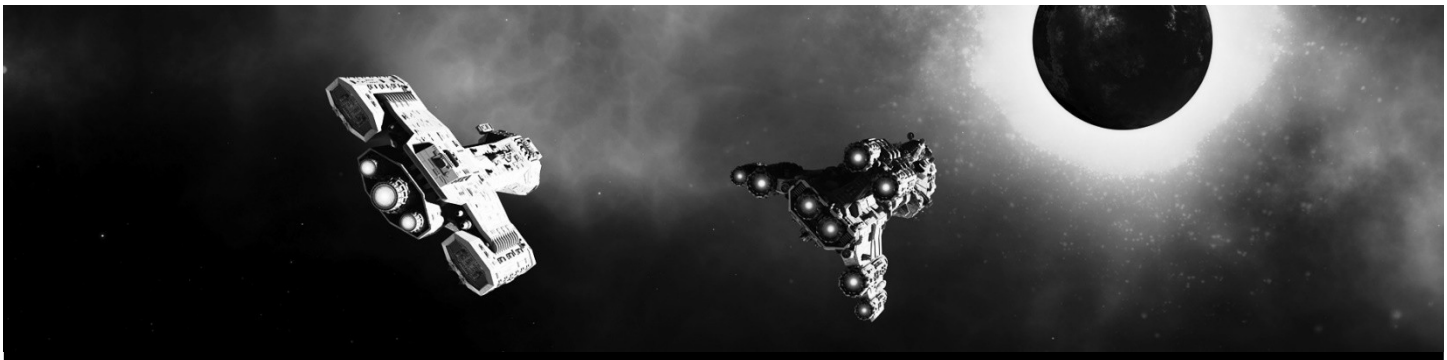
B2.5 End Phase

The End Phase serves primarily to mark the end of the game turn. Damage inflicted during the preceding Combat Phase takes effect at this time. Both sides then determine whether conditions for victory have been met (see below). Flip all counters so the side without the grey stripe is facing up.

B3 VICTORY

If during the End Phase either side has scored enough victory points (VPs) to meet or exceed the VP target of the chosen scenario, that side wins. If both sides have scored enough VPs, the side with the higher total is the winner.

In the default scenario, each starship destroyed awards the opposing side VPs equal to its combat rating.



C MOVEMENT

Starship movement in **Starmada** is governed by the first of Newton's Laws: an object in motion will remain in motion unless acted upon by an external force. In game turns, the object is a starship, and the force is the thrust produced by its engines.

The procedure for completing a starship's movement consists of three steps:

1) Movement orders are written during the Orders Phase.
2) The thrust requirement of the written orders is determined and compared to the starship's current engine rating. If the requirement exceeds the engine rating, the orders are invalid.
3) The starship's counter is moved on the game board during the Movement Phase.

C1 MOVEMENT ORDERS

During the Orders Phase, players secretly record movement orders for each starship under their control. Orders consist of forward movement and/or pivots; these are written in the appropriate box of the SSD, using the following notation:

- A number indicates forward movement: e.g., "3" means the starship is to move forward three hexes.
- "P" indicates a one-hexside (60°) pivot to port (counter-clockwise).
- "S" indicates a one-hexside (60°) pivot to starboard (clockwise).
- "U" indicates a three-hexside (180°) pivot (a "U-turn").

Forward movement is conducted in the direction of the starship's heading, as shown by the arrow at the top right of its counter.

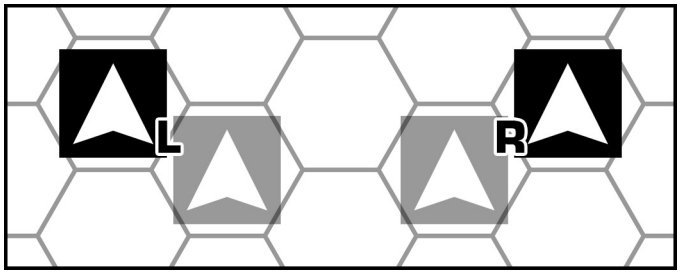
Movement orders may include up to three one-hexside pivots or a single U-turn; all one-hexside pivots must be in the same direction. Thus, "4P2" and "1S2S" are examples of valid movement orders; "2P1S" and "2U1P" are not.

C1.1 Speed

At the end of its movement orders, a starship's speed is written in parentheses: the speed is the sum of all forward movement included in those orders. For example, "4P2" results in a speed of 6 (4+2); the final movement orders are written "4P2(6)." Speed is the primary factor in determining the thrust requirement (p.9).

C1.2 Sideslips

A starship may plot sideslips in its movement orders, using "L" and "R" to indicate a one-hex slip to the left or right, respectively. When performing a sideslip, the ship is moved forward and to the left or right, without changing its heading, as illustrated below. Each sideslip adds +1 to the ship's speed.



A starship intends to move forward two hexes, sideslip one hex to the left, and move forward another two hexes. Its movement orders are recorded as "2L2(5)."

Starships may only slip in one direction per Movement Phase; this must be in the direction corresponding to any pivots conducted (port/left; starboard/right). For example, "1L2R(5)" is invalid, as the orders contain slips in both directions, while "R3P(4)" is also invalid, as the sideslip (R) is in the opposite direction from the one-hexside pivot (P).

C2 ENGINES & THRUST

After a starship's movement orders are written, the thrust requirement is determined and compared to the ship's current engine rating.

If the thrust required for the starship's recorded movement orders exceeds its current engine rating, the orders are invalid and cannot be completed. Any ship discovered to have invalid orders moves forward hexes equal to its speed in the previous game turn.

C2.1 Engine Rating

A starship's movement is limited by the power of its engines, as quantified by its engine rating. A ship's engine rating is represented by the value in the first uncrossed box on its engine track.

The starship below begins the game with an engine rating of 5; after two engine boxes are crossed off (p.13) its engine rating drops to 4.

Once a starship's engine boxes have all been crossed off, each attack die rolled against it is modified by +1 (p.13).

C2.2 Thrust Requirement

Each set of movement orders has an associated thrust requirement, or the minimum engine rating needed to complete the orders. The thrust requirement depends upon the number of pivots to be performed:

- If the starship is performing no pivots, the thrust requirement is the difference between the ship's speed in the previous game turn and its current speed. When determining the difference, always subtract the smaller value from the larger. If both values are the same, the thrust requirement is zero. This is the only way to apply zero thrust; thus, a starship without a current engine rating will continue to move at the same speed, and in the same heading, indefinitely.
- If the starship is performing a single one-hexside pivot, the thrust requirement is the ship's speed in the previous game turn or its current speed, whichever is greater.
- If the starship is performing two or three one-hexside pivots, or a single U-turn, the thrust requirement is the sum of the ship's speed in the previous game turn and its current speed.

Ex.1: A starship with a previous speed of 7 plots movement orders of "2(2)." The orders contain no pivots, so the thrust requirement is the difference between the previous and current speeds: 7–2 = 5.

Ex.2: A starship with a previous speed of 5 plots movement orders of "2P2(4)." The orders contain a single one-hexside pivot, so the thrust requirement is the greater of the previous and current speeds: max{5,4} = 5.

Ex.3: A starship with a previous speed of 3 plots movement orders of "1U1(2)." The orders contain a U-turn, so the thrust requirement is the sum of the previous and current speeds: 3+2 = 5.

Unless otherwise specified by the scenario, during the first game turn assume each starship's previous speed was equal to its engine rating.

C2.3 Sideslips & Thrust

Each sideslip included in a starship's movement orders adds +1 to the thrust requirement.

A starship with a previous speed of 4 has movement orders of "P2L2(5)." The thrust requirement is 6 (max{4,5}+1 = 6).

C3 MOVING THE STARSHIP

Once movement orders have been recorded and confirmed as valid, proceed to the Movement Phase, during which starship counters are moved on the game board according to their orders.

A starship has movement orders of "2P1(3)." Its counter is moved two hexes forward, pivoted one hexside (60°) to port (counter-clockwise), and moved another one hex forward.

C3.1 Stacking

Starships may move through hexes occupied by other ships without incident: space is big enough for them to pass. Further, two or more ships from the same side may end their movement in the same hex. However, if ships from opposing sides end their movement in the same hex, the situation must be resolved.

Roll a die for each starship and add its current engine rating (re-roll any ties between opposing ships). The ship with the lowest total remains in place; then, in ascending order, each ship either remains in place (if on the same side as the first ship) or shifts to an adjacent hex, maintaining its current heading.

A cruiser ends its movement in the same hex as two opposing destroyers. A die is rolled for each starship, adding its current engine rating. The cruiser (engine rating 4) rolls a 3, for a total of 7; the destroyers (engine ratings 5 and 6, respectively) roll a 4 and a 2, for respective totals of 9 and 8. As the cruiser's total is lowest, it remains in place. The two destroyers shift to adjacent hexes; they can both shift into the same hex, or they can split between separate hexes.

Opposing starships may not shift into the same hex. In the rare event there are no available hexes adjacent to the contested hex, the ship shifts two hexes, maintaining its current heading.

C3.2 Leaving the Game Board

If a starship's movement orders cause it to leave the game board, it is immediately removed from play and the ship may not return. Unless scenario rules state otherwise, ships leaving the board are considered destroyed, and the opposing side receives the normal VPs.

C4 SPECIAL ACTIONS

Only one type of special action is allowed when playing games using the **Cadet's Manual**. Other actions are described in the **Starmada Core Rulebook**.

C4.3 Hyperjump

Many science fiction settings include faster-than-light (FTL) travel. For this to be possible, the concept of hyperspace has often been postulated. The exact nature of hyperspace (and even its name) will vary with the setting; regardless, its role is to give ships an escape route from battle.

To enter hyperspace, a starship must have an operational Hyperdrive (p.16). Hyperdrive activation is recorded by writing a pound sign (#) at the start of the starship's movement orders: e.g., "#: 4(4)." While activating its Hyperdrive, a ship may neither pivot nor sideslip.

During the End Phase, any starship that has written hyperjump orders for at least two consecutive game turns, including the current game turn, may (but is not required to) enter hyperspace. A ship entering hyperspace is removed from the game board and considered destroyed for scenario purposes; however, the opposing side receives only 50% normal VPs, rounded up.