

SQUADRON COMPOSITION

Squadrons are composed of two or more vessels of similar size. Under normal circumstances, only vessels of the same hull type can be grouped into a squadron. In some cases, however, it may be desirable to group frigates and raiders into the same squadron, or to group cruisers and battlecruisers or grand cruisers. In broad terms, the different tendencies towards speed, structure and armament of a given hull type may make combining different hull types difficult in practice, particularly when the hulls are very different.

Beyond that, the way that squadrons carry out actions means that wildly different armament can cause problems as well—a squadron with only one torpedo-armed vessel will not fully benefit from spending actions to reload those torpedoes, as the action is wasted for every vessel but the torpedo-armed one.

Typically, squadrons may be compiled of transports, raiders and frigates, light cruisers, cruisers, and battlecruisers, or grand cruisers. However, at the GM's discretion, different hull types can be mixed in squadrons.

SQUADRON FORMATION

Regular communication is required between vessels in a squadron, using vox and astrotelepathy to ensure that every vessel knows what it's meant to be doing at any given moment. The squadron's commander must give orders to every vessel under his command, and long distances hinder the necessary swiftness of communication.

Every vessel in the squadron must remain within 3VU of at least one other vessel in the squadron. The entire squadron must form a single unbroken "chain," with no gap between vessels of greater than 3 VU. If, for any reason, the squadron formation is broken, the squadron's next Manoeuvre Action must involve bringing the squadron back into formation—if it wants to remain operational as a squadron. Squadrons cannot operate without a continuous, short line of communication, and are under standing orders to attempt to regroup when those lines are broken.

SQUADRON CREW AND ORDERS

Squadrons move and fight as a single entity, moving in formation and firing at the same targets.

A squadron has a single Crew Rating, which applies to every ship within the squadron. If multiple ships have different Crew Ratings, use the Crew Rating of the lowest ship in the squadron.

At the start of the combat, roll 1d10 and add the highest Detection Bonus (the tens digit of the Detection characteristic) of the ships in the squadron. This is the squadron's Initiative.

During each Strategic Round, each squadron must perform one Manoeuvre Action, and may perform one Shooting Action, and it may perform a number of Extended Actions as deemed appropriate by the GM.

The Manoeuvre performed by the squadron must be the same for every ship—they must all move the same distance and turn in the same direction. Should, at any point, a test be called for to successfully perform a Manoeuvre Action, then

a single test is made, based on the squadron's Crew Rating, and the lowest Manoeuvrability of the ships in the squadron.

Resolving a squadron's Shooting Action is dealt with separately below.

Extended Actions are likewise performed by the squadron as a whole, using a single test to resolve the success or failure of the action.

SHOOTING AT SQUADRONS

Shooting at squadrons must be resolved in a slightly different way than firing at individual vessels. When firing at a squadron, the primary target will always be the vessel in the squadron that is closest to the firing ship.

When firing a weapon, the first hit scored must be against the primary target. Any additional hits scored may be allocated against any other vessel in the squadron, so long as at least half of the total hits scored by that Weapon Component are allocated to the primary target.

With hits scored from macrobatteries, the damage rolls are added together as usual after being allocated to a target vessel, with all the hits allocated to a single vessel being totalled. With hits scored from lances, the damage rolls are resolved individually as normal.

Due to the way torpedoes, attack craft, and nova cannons attack—relying on actual physical location—all torpedoes, attack craft and nova cannons will attack whichever vessel they pass within range of, regardless of whether or not they are part of a squadron.

Ships suffer damage and critical hits individually, but damage to Crew Population and Morale are resolved collectively for the entire squadron.

SQUADRON SHOOTING: MASSED FIRE

Squadrons fire in a different manner than lone ships, representing their ability to fill space with shots. This ability is called Massed Fire. When a squadron performs Massed Fire, select any number of either macrobatteries or lances; the two may not be combined for this purpose. Then select a single one of those Components.

Roll to hit with that Component as normal. Every additional Component after the first grants an additional +10 to hit and +1 to the Strength of the Component for that shot only (effectively increasing the number of maximum shots by one). The damage, range and Crit Rating are all determined by the Component for which the attack roll is being made—however, all Weapon Components being used must be in range of the target. In addition, as only a single attack roll is being made only one Critical Hit can be scored.

Squadrons can combine macrobatteries or lances into multiple groups for purposes of Massed Fire—for example, a squadron with eight macrobatteries could fire make one Massed Fire with all eight weapons, two with four each, or any other combination.

This is intended to speed up combat involving squadrons of NPC starships, as well as give smaller ships an ability to work together to take out larger vessels.

NPC STARSHIPS

"Target sighted at seventy-thousand kilometres and closing: plotting firing solution..."

– Master of Gunnery Augustin Maechenko, *Damnation's Bane*

The following section is designed to facilitate the quick and simple use of NPC starships. Often, the group as a whole manages a single starship, while the GM has to manage several on his own. These rules are intended to simplify the GM's job.

ACTIONS AND ORDERS

Normal rules for Extended Actions are designed primarily with the Explorers in mind. The Extended Action rules assume that one of the Explorers will be performing the action as an alternative to piloting the ship or firing the guns. The number of Extended Actions that the vessel can perform is inherently limited by the number of available Explorers.

This is not the case with NPC vessels. NPC vessels have a single generic crew, rather than an assortment of Explorers to command the action. While it is possible to create an NPC command crew for each ship to perform these roles, the added complication can slow gameplay and requires increased preparation.

To aid in faster, streamlined gameplay, GMs can choose to adopt the Order system for their NPC starships. Instead of performing a number of Extended Actions alongside their Shooting Action and Manoeuvre Action, NPC vessels may perform a single Order. Orders require no test, and are somewhat broader in scope than Extended Actions. Orders vary in effect based on the Crew Rating of the vessel performing the Order.

The available Orders are as follows:

All Ahead Full

The ship's engineers prepare the vessel to surge forwards, diverting power to the engines.

Effect: The ship's speed this Strategic Turn is increased by a distance determined by the ship's Crew Rating, so long as it only moved in a straight line.

Incompetent (20): +1 VU

Competent (30): +1d5 VU

Crack (40): +1d5+1 VU

Veteran (50): +1d5+2 VU

Elite (60): +2d5 VU

Damage Control

The ship's repair crews set about trying to get Damaged Components functioning again.

Effect: A number of Damaged, Disabled, Depressurised or Unpowered Components equal to the ship's Crew Rating Bonus are returned to full function or a number of fires equal to the Ship's Crew Rating are immediately extinguished. The number of Strategic Turns required before the

Component is repaired is determined by the ship's Crew Rating. However, once this Order has been performed, a new Order may be performed during subsequent turns.

Incompetent (20): 4 Turns

Competent (30): 4 Turns

Crack (40): 3 Turns

Veteran (50): 2 Turns

Elite (60): 1 Turn

Launch Attack Craft

At the orders of the ship's master of ordnance, fighters, bombers and assault boats scramble.

Effect: The ship's launch bays unleash the active attack craft. This can be used to start multiple attack craft operations, as determined by the ship's Crew Rating;

Incompetent (20): 1 operation

Competent (30): 1 operation

Crack (40): 2 operations

Veteran (50): 3 operations

Elite (60): 4 operations

Prepare to Manoeuvre

The engineers divert power to the manoeuvring thrusters, preparing for a sharp turn or sudden change in speed.

Effect: The ship gains a bonus to its Manoeuvrability characteristic as determined by the ship's Crew Rating;

Incompetent (20): +5 Manoeuvrability

Competent (30): +5 Manoeuvrability

Crack (40): +10 Manoeuvrability

Veteran (50): +10 Manoeuvrability

Elite (60): +15 Manoeuvrability

Reload Ordnance

Torpedoes are loaded into their tubes and attack craft are armed and fuelled for an operation.

Effect: The ship's torpedo tubes are loaded, and a number of attack craft squadrons equal to the total Strength rating of the ship's launch bays are made active.

Target Lock

Augurs and targeting systems are calibrated and anointed to better detect and assail the enemy.

Effect: The ship gains a bonus to its Detection characteristic and to all attack rolls as determined by the ship's Crew Rating;

Incompetent (20): +5 Detection and +5 to Hit

Competent (30): +5 Detection and +10 to Hit

Crack (40): +10 Detection and +15 to Hit

Veteran (50): +10 Detection and +20 to Hit

Elite (60): +15 Detection and +20 to Hit

DAMAGE TO NPC SHIPS

As with several other rules pertaining to starships, the rules for Critical Hits, Crew Population and Morale presented in the **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook are primarily designed for the use of player characters. As such, they tend to include details which are largely unnecessary to running NPC starships.

Simplified methods for resolving Critical Hits and damage to Crew Population and Morale are presented here.

TABLE 4-1: NPC SHIP CRITICAL HITS

Roll	Result
1	Bulkheads rupture or the hull implodes, dealing an additional +2 Hull Integrity damage to the vessel. If damaged by a weapon that affects multiple Components, it deals +4 Hull Integrity damage instead.
2	A lucky strike Disables one Weapon Component of the attacker's choice.
3	The ship's sensor systems are damaged by enemy fire. The ship suffers a -10 penalty to Ballistic Skill Tests until the damage is repaired.
4	Thruster assemblies are torn away or rendered inoperable. The ship suffers a -20 penalty to Manoeuvrability until the damage is repaired.
5	Fire!: Alarms scream through the ship as an inferno rages through passageways and compartments, and must be contained and extinguished as soon as possible before it will destroy the ship. Each turn, the ship suffers 1d10 damage to both Crew Population and Morale, and one Component of the GM's choice is Disabled.
6+	An extremely powerful blow strips away the target's Void Shields. The Void Shields are inoperative until the damage is repaired.

CRITICAL HITS

The majority of Critical Hits scored only use the first five results on the table. Many of those that remain result in long-term effects that are less relevant to NPC vessels, which may only appear once. With that in mind, a shorter, NPC-specific Critical Hit table is presented here. This table can be rolled on in place of the normal Critical Hit table, but should only be used when generating weapon crits, not when the starship is reduced to zero Hull Integrity.

GMs should note that this table is presented to drastically simplify Critical Hits, and thus is focused only on effects that matter in starship combat. Therefore, it works best when used with unimportant enemy starships. In an epic duel between the Explorers and a nemesis, the regular Critical Hit chart on page 222 of the **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook is likely to be more exciting and interesting.

Disabled: This new result appears multiple times on the NPC Critical Hit table, and is a simple way of noting that a Component has stopped working for some reason, and must be repaired.

CREW POPULATION AND MORALE

The matter of tracking Crew Population and Morale adds a layer of bookkeeping to starship combat that may prove to be a needless complication for a GM, particularly as many of the effects of a starship losing crew or morale are long-term issues unlikely to be a worthwhile consideration with regards to an NPC vessel.

However, the matter is not so inconsequential that it can be completely ignored. The hindrance of depleted crew and failing morale are still significant factors in space combat. Consequently, a faster method of resolving damage to crew and morale is presented here.

NPC starships are able to sustain an amount of Crew Population or Morale damage equal to their ship's Hull Integrity plus Crew Rating. Therefore, a ship with a Competent (30) Crew and 40 Hull Integrity could sustain a Crew Population loss of 43. This value cannot exceed the ship's maximum Crew Population or Morale value.

NPC starships do not suffer the regular effects for Crew Population or Morale loss as indicated on page 224 of the **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook. Instead, when they exceed the described threshold, they have either lost enough men or morale that they no longer have the resources or stomach to fight, and attempt to disengage from combat during each subsequent turn. If they are brought to 0 Crew Population or Morale, the ship becomes a empty, inoperative tomb with no crew, or the crew rises up in rebellion, killing all the senior staff. With the latter result, they may still attempt to flee, fight, or negotiate with their enemies at the GM's discretion.

This method is an extremely simplified means of tracking Crew Population and Morale loss, and allows Explorers a means to drive off enemy ships without destroying them. Again, this should only be used with enemy starships that are minor and unimportant to the plot, not major adversaries.

MUSTERING THE FLEET

"The void is a cruel and deadly mistress, and one whom your species has not learned to tame."

— Anastraelin Bleakshard, Craftmaster of the *Architect of Pain*

Setting up space combats requires a careful hand. The potential variables are many and varied, and a few good or bad rolls or a poorly chosen adversary can turn what should have been a desperate stand-off into an overwhelming victory, or vice versa. Within this section are a number of hints and guidelines to setting up a challenging space combat encounter.

OFFENCE AND DEFENCE

One important consideration the GM should make is that the number of starships is seldom the most accurate measure of how deadly a force is. Instead, the amount of firepower a vessel can bring to bear on one target, and the number of targets the vessel can effectively attack are better considerations of its offensive power, and the number of shields they possess is a very important consideration when determining a vessel's defensive capabilities.

A vessel that has only a single, slow-firing weapon, against one with two void shields, is unlikely to be able to harm its target reliably, as it cannot reasonably expect to overcome its target's shields, let alone deal significant Hull or Critical damage. Meanwhile, a vessel with a combination of macrobatteries and lances against a poorly-shielded target is likely to cause considerable harm every turn, able to overwhelm shields and

IV: RULES OF WAR

rip away chunks of hull, and even reliably cause Critical Hits, disabling Components and hindering a target's ability to fight back. Broadly speaking, it is most effective to commit at least two weapon systems to attacking a target, in order to ensure that the enemy's shields are stripped away and at least some damage can be inflicted.

Another consideration, although one related to this first point, is hull type and appropriate tactics. Different hull types have different weapon configurations, different tendencies towards speed and armour, and different degrees of manoeuvrability.

TRANSPORTS

These vessels are rarely configured for combat. Typically slow, unwieldy, and poorly armed, transports are not dangerous foes. It is a rare transport that carries enough firepower to significantly hinder an enemy vessel, and a rarer one still that can be anything but outmanoeuvred and outrun by true warships.

RAIDERS

Agile but poorly armoured, raiders are configured to carry potent firepower, but cannot stand up to a great deal of return fire, forcing them to attempt to outmanoeuvre or outrun their enemies. The majority of a raider's firepower is forward-facing, meaning that in order to attack successfully, they must close with their targets head-on before breaking off to limit retaliatory fire; essentially, raiders perform long attack runs against their targets.

FRIGATES

In many ways the counterpoint to raiders, frigates are less agile but have better armour and greater versatility in their firepower. Typically armed with dorsal weaponry, a frigate can throw fire in almost any direction, and combined with their still-considerable speed and agility, makes them excellent escorts for heavier, slower, or more vulnerable vessels.

LIGHT CRUISERS

There are, broadly speaking, two varieties of light cruiser. The first variety is swift and manoeuvrable, able to attack

flanks. The second is heavier and slower, serving more as a cheap alternative to a true cruiser. Either have a range of weapon systems sufficient to direct effective firepower against an enemy in either flank. Their greater size allows them to carry heavier, more powerful weapons such as broadside macrocannons, lance batteries and large torpedo salvos.

CRUISERS

At this point, the ability to unleash a true broadside volley becomes apparent, at least with Imperial-style ships. In all cases, the number, power and versatility of a cruiser's weapons are such that they can easily engage multiple targets, or lay down withering fire against a single adversary. This does depend on how the weapons are configured and the specific nature of the cruiser involved (for example, Eldar and Ork cruisers typically mount most or all of their firepower in the prow, while Imperial ones are more likely to rely on heavy broadsides, which splits their fire to port and starboard). Cruisers are typically very slow and cumbersome vessels, but heavily armoured and resilient, often carrying multiple void shields to further resist enemy fire.

BATTLECRUISERS

Similar to cruisers in most ways, battlecruisers are typically more heavily armed, mounting additional weaponry. All the advice regarding cruisers applies here, though their heavier weapons load-out makes them a match for more powerful enemies.

GRAND CRUISERS

Relatively rare and extremely powerful, grand cruisers as the Imperium employs them tend to be capable of far more potent broadsides at the cost of a relative lack of versatility, lacking any weaponry capable of firing in more than one arc, and lacking any prow armament.

BATTLESHIPS

Terrifyingly potent vessels, battleships normally mount the equivalent armament of two cruisers or a small squadron of frigates or raiders. The average battleship is slow and lacking in

Fleet Communiqué

Sent: Astropath Ternicus-750.815.M41

To: Admiral Nathaniel Horne, Captain of the *Gryphon* and Officer Commanding Passage Watch 27 Est.

From: Commander Victoria Horne, Captain of the *Hawk*, extended operations, the Koronus Expanse
As of 8 bells this day, my vessel completed an impromptu rendezvous and joint patrol with the *Swiftsure*, operating in Winterscale's Realm.

We came across our sister ship escorting two Chartist vessels loaded with nephium from Lucin's Breath, and offered escort. Our mutual escort continued for two weeks. At 743.815, we were ambushed during a real space translation off the Trailing Shoals, however the vessels proved no match for two Imperial warships. With one destroyed, the others fled to the warp. I have included what information I possess about the vessels.

Communiqué Ends

Postscript: Sailing alongside Commander Rivers was a pleasure, Nathaniel, as it always is. Our vessels complement each other well, with her firepower augmented by my lances, and my attack craft able to intercept any smaller vessels.

I'm more concerned about the attack. Though we saw it off handily, the *Swiftsure* may have had problems alone. It appears pirate activity is increasing in Winterscale's Realm, but what if they were targeting our vessels directly?



manoeuvrability, but extremely resilient in terms of armour, hull integrity and layers of void shielding. Depending on armament and configuration, a battleship may be able to direct four or five weapon Components at a single target, a potentially crippling amount of firepower for any smaller vessel.

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Different weapons serve different purposes in battle, and understanding their usage is important to setting up combats.

MACROBATTERIES

Rapid-firing but imprecise, macrobatteries tend to be good at overwhelming shields and, against unshielded and/or lightly-armoured targets, good at dealing conventional Hull Integrity damage. However, against heavily-armoured targets or targets with considerable shielding, it requires a lucky hit to deal any damage beyond removing the shields. The majority of vessels are likely to carry at least one macrobattery, if only for preparing a target by removing void shields.

LANCES

Compared to macrobatteries, lances are powerful and precise but slow-firing. Effective against heavily-armoured targets and more likely to deal crits, a lance is unfortunately somewhat ineffective at overcoming shields, due to its low rate of fire.

Lance-armed vessels are more effective when a target's shields have been overwhelmed by a macrobattery first; lance

shots are too useful and too rare a commodity to waste against an enemy's shields.

TORPEDOES

Superficially similar to macrobatteries in some ways, torpedoes deal considerable damage and completely ignore void shields. However, the true value of torpedoes is in area denial. Due to the indirect nature of a torpedo attack – where the weapons travel across the “battlefield”—the threat of an attack is as valuable as the actual damage, as it can deter an enemy from moving in a particular direction.

This technique of “torpedo herding,” of course, is reliant either on players being appropriately considerate of risk, or upon the GM roleplaying enemies appropriately—reckless foes like Orks, for example, are unlikely to care about enemy torpedoes quite as much as more cautious foes.

LAUNCH BAYS AND ATTACK CRAFT

Carriers open up a whole variety of tactics to a vessel, but also add a lot of complication. It takes extended actions and/or Orders to use attack craft, drawing upon the limited resource of character actions that may often be needed elsewhere. However, the damage potential of assault boats and bombers, and the defensive capabilities afforded by fighters, can make this expenditure worthwhile.

Attack Craft are versatile and potent assets. Bombers and assault boats can deal considerable amounts of damage, including multiple critical hits, while fighters can negate the effectiveness of torpedoes and the otherwise-deadly attack craft.

NOVA CANNONS

A Nova Cannon is a difficult weapon to use effectively. Their relative inaccuracy is a severe drawback, but the damage they can inflict, often to multiple targets, makes them a valuable weapon to those willing to make the effort. Spending actions to lock on and increase the chance to hit can be very important with these weapons. A single well-placed hit from a Nova Cannon can deal an unparalleled amount of damage, including the potential for several critical hits.

The area effect quality of Nova Cannons makes them effective area-denial weapons. Even an inaccurate shot can deal some damage to numerous enemies, discouraging enemies from grouping together too closely. As with “torpedo herding,” this is reliant either on the Explorers being cautious of risk, or upon the GM roleplaying enemies appropriately.

CELESTIAL PHENOMENA

The void is not as empty as it might seem to some. Gas clouds, asteroid fields, planets, the influence of gravity and stranger things besides can influence starship combat in a variety of ways, helping or hindering those who pass near such phenomena. Battles often take place near celestial phenomena simply because such regions tend to exist near star systems, which tend to attract their share of conflicts.