The year is 4096.
The survivors of the Northern Union fleet accelerated towards
the edge of the system. Left behind were the slowly expanding
spheres of debris that had been escorts and capital ships. The
Marasian Empire had defended their newly colonized system
with two light carriers and a couple of cruisers, one heavy
and one light. Far too few units to stop the Northerns as it
turned out. A Northern destroyer was sliced in half, and a
heavy cruiser damaged heavily enough that it was left behind
for repairs. But that was a small cost to pay for control of the
planetary system and all of its resources.
The Marasian ships were derelict hulks at best.
A Northern industrial platform was already converting itself into
a colony. Soon there would be a base station to dominate the
system. Reinforcements were already inbound. The Northern fleet
would not give up its newly conquered territory without a fight.
1.0 Introduction

In the far, far future, two empires, remnants of the long lost Terran Homeworld, are brought into conflict over dwindling resources and the last few uncolonized planets in their sector. In the distant past, these two empires were allies against the Titans (see Astra Titanus) and Xeno incursions (see Forlorn: Hope), but with their frontiers colliding and diplomacy failing, it is time for admirals, captains, and crews to carry the fate of empires to the stars and find their destiny.

New gaming terms, when initially defined, appear in dark red lettering for quick referencing.

The instructions for this game are organized into major “Rules” sections as shown in large green Caps font, and represented by the number to the left of the decimal point (e.g., Rule 4.0 is the fourth Rule). These Rules generally explain the game’s subject matter, its components, the procedures for play, the game’s core systems, how to set it up, and how to win.

With each Rule, there can be “Cases” that further explain a Rule’s general concept or basic procedure. Cases might also restrict the application of a Rule by denoting exceptions to it. Cases (and Subcases) are an extension of a Rule shown in the way that they are numbered. For example, Rule 4.1 is the first Case of the fourth Rule; and Rule 4.1.2 is the second Subcase of the first Case of the fourth Rule.

Important information is in red text.

Italic blue blocks are examples, tips and designer notes.
**2.0 COMPONENTS**
Each game of *Imperial Stars II* includes the following:

- One rulebook (you’re reading it)
- Two 8½” × 5½” Player Aid mats
- Two 11” × 17” double-sided maps
- 76 9/16” unit counters*
- 10 5/8” Operations chits*
- 14 5/8” round Planet markers*
- 2 Ops Tracking markers*
- Four six-sided dice (not provided in the polybag version)

• One opaque container (not provided) such as a coffee mug or a space helmet

*Some soot residue might occur along the edges of the counters. You may wish to wipe them off with a dry or damp napkin, paper towel, or cloth before playing.*
2.1 Unit Counters

The square counters represent starships and bases (collectively referred to as **units**; *all ships are units, but not all units are ships; the rules are very specific when referring to ships and units*). Each unit is marked with values for its Combat Strength and Movement Allowance; Ships with a **square** behind their Movement Allowance can intercept enemy forces (see 5.5).

- **Carriers** are any ship (including **Base Stations**) marked with triangle icons, each representing one **fighter squadron**.
- **Capital** units are marked with a diamond next to their Combat Strength.
- **Escorts** are ships without diamonds.
- **Industrial Platform** ships’ planet symbol indicates they create colonies cheaper.
- **Bases** have a repair icon to show they can fix damaged units; their special **Capitol** unit icon also indicates that it requires more Hits to destroy.

Each unit’s reverse has a **Zone** (★, A, or B) on the back of its counter used for set up. Units placed face down on the map represent **Colonies** for that side.

**Yellow** units are from the **Northern Union. Red** units are the **Marasian Empire**.

Units are ID’d by their Space Opera Navy nomenclature thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit ID</th>
<th>Combat</th>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Fighters</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Repair</th>
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2.2 The Maps

Hexagons divide the maps to regulate movement. The critical **Homeworld** hexes are named, color-coded, and marked with this icon:

Hexes are either **Clear** space or space terrain: Planetary Systems, Asteroids, Nebula, Dust Cloud and Singularity (a fancy name for Black Holes). Terrain affects movement and combat as per Rule 10.0.

On the sides of each map are three **zones** for each player: Reinforcement Zone **Alpha**, Reinforcement Zone **Beta**, and the **Scrapyard** for destroyed units. These zones are color-coded for each side.

2.3 Planet Markers

The round **Planet** markers grant a hidden beneficial effect when played (see 11.0).

2.4 Operations Chits

Each player has a set of five **Operations** chits (numbered: 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8/3) which, when drawn, indicate how many Operations (or “Ops”) that player receives that turn.

2.5 Dice

Four standard six-sided dice (“d6”) are included in the boxed version of Imperial Stars II. You must provide one ten-sided die (“d10”) to use the Random Operations **Variant Rule** (see 12.2). “Die” or “dice” always refer to the standard six-sided dice, unless otherwise noted.
3.0 Set Up

1. Choose a map and place it between both players. Flip the Planet markers face down and randomize them; then place one Planet marker on each Planetary System hex. Place the leftover marker(s) in an opaque container (a.k.a. “the cup”).

2. Players take their units and separate them by Zone (as shown on their reverse sides).
   2a. Each player places one Base unit in their Homeworld and sets off to one side their remaining Base units.
   2b. Units marked with a ★ on their back begin play face-up, in or adjacent to their owner’s Homeworld hex, no more than two units per hex. (If there is any controversy about it, the Second Player sets up first, see 4 and 5, below.)
   2c. Each player randomizes their respective Zone A and B units and then places them, face down, in their corresponding Reinforcement Zones.

3. Each player takes their five Operations chits, places them face down nearby, and randomizes them.

4. The First Player is the person who most recently read a sci-fi novel. If necessary, break ties using the dice.

5. The Second Player draws one Planet marker from the cup (see 11.0).

This free Planet marker draw balances out the slight disadvantage of going second.

4.0 How to Play

You play Imperial Stars II over a series of Galactic Cycles, each composed of an ever-decreasing number of Game Turns regulated by drawing available Operations chits, with each Game Turn consisting of two Player Turns (one for each player).

4.1 Sequence of Play

At the start your Player Turn, you are the Acting Player and your opponent is the Non-Acting Player. Each Player Turn consists of these Phases played in order:
1. Economic Phase
2. Operations Phase
3. Combat Phase
4. Housekeeping Phase

During your Player Turn, you must complete each Phase before commencing the next.

Sean is the First Player. On the first Game Turn of the first Galactic Cycle, he picks the 5 Operations chit and receives five Operations during this, his first Player Turn.

He spends 3 Operations to deploy one ship from his Alpha Zone to his Homeworld, and then spends his remaining 2 Operations to move some ships.

As there are no hexes with both players’ units in them, combat is skipped and Sean’s Player Turn ends. Ashley, the Second Player, goes next.

4.2 Economic Phase

When you are the Acting Player, you begin your Economic Phase by counting the number of colonized (see 6.1) Planetary System hexes that you control.

You control a hex if you are the only player with units or markers there. A hex is contested when units belonging to both players occupy it.

Next, you draw at random one of your unrevealed Operations chits from that Galactic Cycle and add its value to the count of your controlled System hexes.

Note this sum on the Operations Track of your Player Aid mat using your Ops marker to count down your available Operations points for this turn.

Ashley has five colonies, but Sean has ships at one of them which survived last turn’s combat there, so that Colony is contested, not controlled, thus Ashley’s count is 4. Ashley then draws her 7 Operations chit and, adding 4 + 7, places her Ops chit on the “11” space of the Operations Track of her Player Aid mat.
4.3 Operations Phase

During the Operations Phase of your Game Turn, you spend your Operations to move ships, establish colonies, repair damaged capital units, and/or deploy reinforcements (each of these is explained in more detail in its own Rules section). You need not spend all of your Ops that turn, but unspent Operations are lost; they cannot be saved from turn to turn.

You may perform Operations in any order and perform each multiple times (with different units) as long as you have Ops remaining to spend that turn. You can see the results of one action before deciding on how to spend your Operations for your next action.

The 8/3 Decision: The 8/3 Operations chit is special, as it provides you some choices:

A. If you have other Ops chits left, you do not have to accept your 8/3 Ops chit when you draw it. Instead, you can replace it with another random draw and then return the 8/3 Ops chit to your draw pool where you will draw it again on a future Game Turn that Galactic Cycle.

B. When you play it, you must declare if you are using it to add 8 Operations that turn, or only 3 Operations and you will build a Base that turn (see 6.5).

4.4 Combat Phase

Combat must take place in every hex containing both players’ units, one at time, in the order determined by the Acting Player. In each such hex a single Round of combat is conducted (see 7.0).

4.5 The Housekeeping Phase

During this Phase the game is refreshed for the next Game Turn, which might require a new Galactic Cycle, complete with a Countdown and Initiative check. When all the Game Turns have been completed, the game is over and the winner determined (see 9.0).

5.0 Movement

Each ship can move once per turn; you cannot spend additional Ops to move a ship multiple times in a single turn. Each ship unit (or stack of ship units moving together) must complete their movement before another ship is activated to move.
Bases have a 0 Movement Allowance and thus cannot move once built.

5.1 Movement Activation

One Operation activates one ship, allowing it to move that turn.

5.1.1 Stack Movement: Two or more ships can move together if they start in the same hex and end in the same hex. It costs half the number of Operations to move a stack (round up; so it would cost 1 Op to move one or two ships in a stack; 2 Ops to move three or four ships in a stack, etc.).

Ashley moves a stack of four ships for two operations. Moving five or six ships would cost three operations.

Their maximum movement distance is equal to the ship in that stack with the lowest Movement Allowance.

5.1.2 Half Ops [Variant Rule]: Instead of computing stack movement costs, every ship unit’s activation cost is simply 1/2 of an Ops point. Note that the only thing an unspent 1/2 Ops point can purchase is another ship unit movement activation, and it is lost like other Ops points if left unspent at the end of the turn.

5.2 Stacking Limit

Space is big. You just won’t believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. However, regardless of how big space is, each player is limited to six units in a single hex. You cannot exceed the stacking limit during movement or at any other time.

Ashley and Sean have a combined 12 units in one hex. No more units may be deployed to or move into that hex.

Colony markers do not count against this limit, but a Colony marker cannot be flipped back to a ship if this would exceed the stacking limit (see 6.1).

The technobabble reason for this is that the jump drives used for FTL travel cause interference to other drives and a large amount of space between ships is required. Communications are still limited to light speed, so command and control with a large number of ships, spread out over a vast distance, is impossible.
5.3 Moving Ships on the Map

Each ship, when activated, spends Movement Points (the total of which cannot exceed its Movement Allowance) to move along the map hexes. Stacks, when activated, receive Movement Points equal to the ship in that stack with the lowest Movement Allowance.

Ships must have sufficient Movement Points to enter a hex, or such entry is prohibited that turn. Ships do not have to spend their full Movement Allowance, but unused Movement Points cannot be stored or shared.

Ashley activates two of her ships which are stacked together for 1 Ops point. Since the slowest ship in that stack has a 3 Movement Allowance, its activation immediately gives it 3 Movement Points to spend. Essentially, the stack can move up to three hexes that turn, depending on terrain, etc.

5.4 Terrain Effects on Movement

Certain terrain types have an effect on movement as listed below:

**Asteroids:** All ships must cease movement immediately upon entering an Asteroid hex, losing any remaining Movement Points for that turn. Ships can always freely exit an Asteroid hex without stopping.

**Dust Cloud:** It costs 2 Movement Points to enter a Dust Cloud hex.

**Nebula:** It costs 2 Movement Points to enter a Nebula hex from a Non-Nebula hex; moving from one Nebula hex directly to another costs only 1 Movement Point.

**Singularity:** It costs 0 Movement Points to enter any hex adjacent to a Singularity hex (i.e., their Event Horizon hexes), but damaged capital ships are prohibited from moving adjacent to a Singularity and no ship can end its movement in these hexes. No ships, under any circumstances, can enter a Singularity hex itself.

5.5 Interception

Ships with a current Movement Allowance of 4 or higher (these are indicated on their pieces, but see 11.0 for Redline Events) can intercept an enemy ship or stack movement into an adjacent, Clear (or Homeworld or Planetary System,
which are also treated as Clear) hex. When intercepted, all moving ships must stop in the interception hex, ending movement for that turn.

**Procedure**

The **Acting Player** should pause briefly when moving ships or stacks into Clear hexes adjacent to enemy ships. The **Non-Acting Player** clearly announces the intent to intercept and, after doing so, moves all desired intercepting ships into the interception hex (ships which do not intercept and remain in their original hex can intercept other ships moving into different adjacent Clear hexes). All of the Acting Player’s ships in the intercepted hex must immediately end their movement for the turn. Yes, even if only one ship intercepts a stack of six ships, those six ships’ movement is over for that turn!

**Restriction**

Ships cannot intercept if they are currently in a hex containing enemy units.

Only ships entering a hex can be intercepted; once they leave (or later after they have ceased their movement in a hex), they can no longer be intercepted there.

---

The DD is activated to move. Its Movement Allowance is 4. Moving to **B** would cost two Movement Points. Moving to **C** would use all four Movement Points (**Nebulas** cost two to enter from Non-Nebula hexes). Moving to **D** would cost three Movement Points, while moving to **E** would cost four Movement Points. If the DD started on **D**, it would have to stop moving when entering the **Asteroid** hex at **F**, losing all of its remaining movement!

In this movement example, the red CL could intercept the DD at points **A** or **B**, but not **C**, **D**, or **F** as they are not Clear spaces.
5.6 Engaging Enemy Forces
Ships entering a hex with enemy units must stop unless there are a number of enemy units in the hex that equal or exceed the number of enemy units there. A stack must stop moving until enough ships to match at least the number of enemy units there, but the remaining ships in that stack could continue moving through that hex (an exception to 5.1.1, requiring stacks of ships to start and end their movement in the same hex).

Ashley moves a stack of four ships into a hex with three of Sean’s units. At least three of her ships must cease their movement there, but the fourth ship, if desired, could continue on.

5.7 Disengagement
If your ship(s) begin their movement in a hex that also contains enemy ships, you can move them out of that hex using one additional (+1) Operation to disengage from the enemy’s presence in that hex via normal movement.

Disengaging ships cannot be intercepted (see 5.5) by the ships they just disengaged from in their first hex of movement.

Sean spends 3 Operations to disengage his stack of three ships away from the hex they share with Ashley’s ships (2 to move the stack +1 to disengage it). Ashley’s group that they had just disengaged from could not intercept Sean’s disengaging ships in their first hex of movement. If Sean’s second or later hex of movement is adjacent to any of Ashley’s groups (including the one they disengaged from at the beginning of this movement), Ashley could intercept them again.

6.0 Other Operations Phase Activities
In addition to reinforcements (see 6.2), during your Operations Phase you may also colonize, bring in reinforcements, repair damaged capital ships, recycle from your Scrapyard (see 6.4), and build Bases (see 6.5).

6.1 Colonize
You can colonize a friendly-controlled Planetary System hex.

Procedure
The cost in Operations to colonize is equal to that Planetary System’s distance in hexes to your Homeworld OR to
your closest friendly-controlled Colony hex, whichever is fewer. Count the shortest distance in hexes, including the destination hex but not the starting hex, and pay that amount of Operations to build a Colony there.

**Industrial Platforms** (IP ships) pay half that Operations amount (rounded up) to colonize.

Flip over one of your ship units at that Planetary System hex (even a damaged capital ship) to show its Colony marker side. *If using an IP to colonize, you must flip it.* If there is an unclaimed Planet marker at that Planetary System hex, you now claim it (see 11.0).

**Colony Markers**

Colony markers no longer count as a ship in that hex. However, you may, at any time during either player’s Operations Phase or at the beginning of a Battle, flip that Colony marker back to its ship side again (at full-strength if it is a capital ship), for free, but by doing so you immediately lose your Colony there. This means that a Colony marker can suddenly convert back into a ship to intercept or engage in combat. You can re-colonize that Planetary System hex again later, in the usual manner and at the usual cost, if you so desire.

**Ashley is colonizing a planet with a DD. The new Colony is five hexes from her closest friendly-controlled colony. It costs 5 Operations to colonize. If she used an IP to colonize, it would cost only three instead.**

**6.2 Reinforce**

You may spend Operations to place ships from the Reinforcement Zones onto the map. The exact cost in Ops and number of ships received from that zone are printed in their respective boxes (and varies from map to map).

The number of circular icons is the Operations cost to deploy from that zone.

The number of ships deployed for that cost is usually one, but zones with the icon next to their reinforcement cost allow you to deploy two ships for that listed cost. *If only one ship remains in a zone, the Operations cost is halved (rounded up).*

Face-down ships in a Reinforcement Zone are drawn randomly and played face-up on the map. If there are any face-up ships in a
Reinforcement Zone, you may freely select the face-up ship you desire, or draw a face-down ship, for each reinforcement you purchase from that zone.

You may reinforce multiple times in the same turn as long as you have the Operations to pay for it and there are ships available in the Reinforcement Zones.

Sean spends 3 Operations to deploy a random Alpha Zone unit, but he isn’t satisfied with the resulting DD, so he spends 3 more Operations to deploy another random Alpha Zone unit – a CVB this time, which is much better. He places both ships on the map.

Placement

You place your reinforcement ships in your Homeworld hex or any friendly-controlled Planetary System hexes with a Base (having a Colony there is not necessary, just the Base with no enemy ships present). You can always deploy your reinforcement ships to your Homeworld, even if enemy ships also occupy that hex. Concurrently deployed ships need not be deployed to the same hex.

All ships are deployed at full strength.

You can pay Operations to activate ships that have just reinforced. They can move, colonize, and engage in combat normally on their turn of entry.

Ashley used a Reinforce Action to deploy one IP ship to one of her Bases at a Planetary System hex without a Colony, and then pays Ops to colonize that Planetary System hex with the newly gained IP ship.

6.3 Repair

You can repair (i.e., rotate back 90° so that it is once more aligned with your other ships) a damaged capital ship (see 7.5 and 7.6) that is in the same hex as your Homeworld or a friendly Base at a cost of one Operations point per Hit repaired. You cannot repair ships in a hex if there are enemy units present. Note that, in a single turn, you can repair multiple Hits (see 7.5) to a grievously damaged Base (a Base can repair itself), paying one Ops per Hit removed.
Sean’s Base has taken three Hits. He spends two Operations to repair it so that the Base counter is flipped back face-up and rotated 90° to show its “1 Hit” status.

Units in your Scrapyard cannot be repaired; they can only be recycled (see 6.4).

6.4 Recycle

You can, whenever you like during your Operations Phase, recycle (i.e., permanently remove from play and return to the box) destroyed units in your Scrapyard for various benefits:

- **Gain Operations**: For every two Combat Strength points recycled, you gain 1 Operations point. You gain nothing for only one Combat Strength point; and don’t worry if your Ops Track doesn’t go high enough... you still receive any and all additional Ops granted during your turn, but you will need to remember your total until it is spent down.

- **Gain Planet Markers**: Once during your Operations Phase, you can recycle five Combat Strength points to draw one Planet marker from the cup (if there are any there). If you don’t have “exact change” in the Scrapyard, you must recycle at least five Strength points.

- **Restock the Alpha Zone**: Whenever you have two identical ships (i.e., the same class and all the same values) in your Scrapyard, you may recycle one of them to place the other one, face-up, in your Alpha Zone where it can be purchased as a reinforcement (see 6.2; for Bases see 6.5).

Sean is playing yellow. In his Scrapyard, he has one CA (strength 3), three DDs (1 each), one CVB (2) and two CLs (2 each). He has a lot of options...

With a total of twelve Strength points available thus, he could recycle for: 6 additional Ops this turn, OR he could spend five to draw 1 Planet marker, and also spend six for 3 additional Ops, saving the last one.

He might also restock his Alpha zone with one of the DDs and one CL. That would leave him six Strength points left to recycle, which he might invest in drawing 1 Planet marker - leaving him with one remaining point in his Scrapyard."
6.5 Build a Base

You can only build a Base unit when you: A) have an unbuilt Base unit available to build, and B) draw your 8/3 Operations chit, accept that draw (see 4.3), and declare your decision to take only 3 Ops and build a Base that turn (thus, you can only build a maximum of one Base per Galactic Cycle).

**Placement**

During the Operations Phase in which you declare you are building a Base, you may, at any time during that Phase, take one of your unused available Base units and place it, full-strength, at your Homeworld hex or a friendly-controlled Planetary System hex that does not currently have a Base (i.e., there is a limit of one Base per hex).

**Restrictions:** You cannot build a Base in a hex you do not control (i.e., there can be no enemy units there), nor within two hexes of a Singularity (see 10.0).

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Ashley destroys Sean’s Homeworld base, but loses all of her attacking ships in the process. The next turn, Sean draws and plays his 8/3 Ops chit and builds a new Base unit to replace the one just destroyed at his Homeworld.

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**Return**

Place eliminated Base units in your Scrapyard at full-strength; they can be recycled normally. Restocked (see 6.4) or salvaged (see 11.0) Base units are set aside and simply become “available” to be brought back into play by being built once again.

7.0 Combat

After completing your Operations Phase, play moves on to your Combat Phase. During your Combat Phase, you conduct Battles in every hex occupied by units from both sides, in any order you desire.

Each Battle consists of a single Round that is divided into Steps where both players attack “simultaneously” (that is, losses are applied to both sides and removed from play to their Scrapyards at the end of each Step). A Round is completed at the end of the third Step OR if all of the units from either (or both!) sides are destroyed.
After Ashley spends her last Operations point this turn and concludes her Operations Phase, she scans the map and sees she has three Battles to resolve during her Combat Phase. In one Battle, her units are destroyed giving control of the hex to Sean. In another Battle, she destroys the last enemy unit and takes control of that hex. In the third Battle, units from both sides survive the Battle round and remain in the hex, so neither player controls that hex.

At the end of Sean’s next turn, if he hasn’t disengaged from that hex, another round of combat will ensue during his Combat Phase.

**Battle Rounds**

Battle Rounds consist of these Steps:

1. Colony Abandonment Step
2. First Fighter Step
3. Beam Attack Step
4. Second Fighter Step

After the Second Fighter Step, the Round is over and the next Battle is resolved. Your Combat Phase ends when each Battle has completed its single Round of combat.

**7.1 Colony Abandonment Step**

If a Battle occurs where one player has a Colony marker, that Colony marker can, during this Step, be flipped back to its ship side (at full-strength if it is a capital ship), for free, to participate in the ensuing fight (but note that it must observe the stacking limit, see 5.2). Exercising this option forfeits that Colony, however (see 6.1).

Colony markers themselves do not participate in combat operations. If, at the end of any Combat Phase, a Colony marker finds itself alone in a hex with any enemy ships, that Colony marker is immediately converted back into a ship and sent straight to its Scrapyard. Colonies are not “captured,” thus, but always destroyed in this manner, so it is a hugely important decision whether to abandon them or not when a battle occurs in their hex!

**7.2 Fighter Steps**

During each Fighter Step, both players count the number of fighter symbols (▲) on their (remaining) ships and roll one die for each fighter symbol they have at that battle (you can roll multiple dice to save time). Determine the result of each die roll as shown on the Fighter Combat Results Table on the
Player Aid mat (the terrain effects are built into its columns), and summing the number of Hits they have inflicted on the enemy.

**Fighters** are robotic drones deployed at the beginning of a Battle and left behind at the end to cover the fleet’s maneuvering. Carriers control their fighters in Battle and automatically manufacture dozens of replacements from raw materials during their internal maintenance and refit cycles between Battles.

**Applying Fighter Hits**

When applying fighter Hits, the player whose fighters scored the Hits also applies the Hits.

You must apply every odd-numbered Hit your fighters inflict (e.g., the first, third, and fifth Hits, etc.) to an enemy **escort** ship (i.e., one that is destroyed with only a single Hit) in that Battle, if possible. You may always apply the even-numbered Hits to any enemy target at that Battle (see 7.5, Applying Damage).

Ashley has one CVL and one CVA in Clear space. She rolls four dice and gets a 2, 3, 5 and a 6 – two Hits and two Misses. She applies the first Hit to Sean’s DD (an escort ship) and the second Hit to his damaged CVB. Since each round is simultaneous, Sean gets to roll two dice for the CVB before it blows up. He rolls 1 and 1 – no Hits.

**Second Fighter Step**

The **Second Fighter** Step is resolved the same way as the **First Fighter** Step, but the number of fighters may differ if any of their carriers were destroyed earlier during that Battle Round.

**7.3 The Beam Attack Step**

Units not destroyed in the **First Fighter** Step attack simultaneously in the **Beam Attack** Step. The defender’s ships can attempt to Retreat out of the Battle at this time (see 7.4).

“**Beams**” are not just light and energy beams, but kinetic energy weapons (KEW), mass drivers, short-range sprint missiles, and other projectiles. The ships make high-speed passes at each other while computers control the firing of offensive and defensive weapons (because Humans are too slow to react).
Procedure

During each Beam Attack Step, the Non-Acting Player must first decide and announce whether his forces at that Battle will exercise their option to Retreat (see 7.4). Afterward, each player totals the Strength points of all their friendly units in that Battle and then rolls two dice, using their sum to determine the result as shown on the Beam Combat Results Table on the Player Aid mat. The resulting number is the number of Hits inflicted upon the enemy.

Ashley has a total Combat Strength of 6. Sean has a total of 9. They each rolled a total of 8 on their two dice – very average. Ashley scores three Hits and Sean inflicts four Hits.

Applying Beam Hits

When applying beam Hits, the player who suffered the Hits applies them to their own ships at that battle (see 7.5, Applying Damage).

Ashley resolves the four Hits she received by rotating and then removing the same DN (capital ships endure two Hits before they’re destroyed). She then removes one DD and one CL to complete the toll from those four Hits.

Sean resolves his three Hit suffered by rotating his Base once (one Hit), flipping it over to show its reduced side and rotating it back (the second Hit), and finally rotating the reduced Base to show that it is damaged (the third Hit; see 7.5). Play then moves ahead to the Second Fighter Step with both players rolling again for fighters (see 7.2).

7.4 The Defender’s Retreat Option

The Attacking Player* cannot Retreat during a Battle. If the Defending Player (i.e., the player who is not the Attacking Player at that Battle) chooses to exercise the Retreat Option, that player must roll one die for each friendly ship at that Battle to see if it escapes. This is an all-or-nothing option; you cannot attempt to Retreat with only some of your defending ships and not others.

*Generally, the Attacking Player is the Acting Player, with the exception of a Battle caused by intercepting ships that turn, see 5.5; in that case, the Non-Acting Player initiated that Battle and becomes the “Attacking Player.”
• If the result is **less than** that ship’s Movement Allowance, it successfully Retreats and is placed in an adjacent hex free of enemy units and within the stacking limit (see 5.2). *If no such hex is available, you cannot exercise the Retreat Option.* Ships that successfully Retreat are immune from suffering further Hits at that Battle. **Important:** Fighters from Retreating ships do still get their parting shot in during the **Second Fighter Step**!

• If the result is **equal to or greater than** that ship’s Movement Allowance, it fails to Retreat. It remains in the Battle hex, has its Combat Strength reduced to 0 for this **Beam Attack Step**, and can suffer Hits at that Battle.

> **Once the Defending Player pulls the trigger and exercises the Retreat Option, they will not be rolling dice or infrlicting any Hits during that Beam Attack Step. Their fighters, if any, still participate fully in the Second Fighter Step, however (think of them as the “rear guard”).**

### 7.5 Applying Damage

An escort ship is destroyed if it receives one Hit. A **full-strength** (i.e., undamaged) capital ship is **damaged** when it takes one Hit (rotate it 90° to reflect this status). A **damaged** capital ship is **destroyed** when it suffers one Hit. Therefore, completely destroying a capital ship requires two Hits.

You cannot assign more Hits to a unit than it takes to destroy it. If all units are destroyed, excess Hits are ignored.

Remove destroyed units from the map and place them in their owner’s Scrapyard.

#### Damage to Base Stations

Bases are double-sided units. They are similar to capital ships in that the first Hit they absorb rotates them 90° to indicate one Hit. The second Hit flips the Base counter to show its striped (“crippled”) side with reduced values but rotated to normal facing. The third Hit rotates the crippled Base, and the fourth Hit destroys it – sending it to the Scrapyard (showing its full-strength side when placed there).
7.6 Damage Effects
A damaged (i.e., rotated 90°) capital ship or Base has no reductions in its abilities, with the exception that it cannot move adjacent to a Singularity hex (see 10.0). Continue using a damaged unit’s printed values.

8.0 Housekeeping Phase
Begin the Housekeeping Phase by setting aside, face-up, your just-used Operations chit from that turn; play passes to your opponent, who becomes the new Acting Player.
If your opponent has no unrevealed Operations chits in their pool to draw from (which would also be true for you), a new Galactic Cycle commences as follows:

8.1 Countdown
Both players remove their lowest remaining Operations chit in their discard pile (the 8/3 Operations chit is the highest valued token and so is removed last; when you remove that chit, the game is over; see 9.0). The remaining Operations chits are flipped face-down and randomized to form new token pools.

Ashley plays the 8/3, her last Operations chit. Her discard pile also has the 7, 6 and 5 tokens. She removes the 5 and takes the others back, flipping them to show their reverse sides, and randomizes them to form a new pool. The game will last a maximum of six (3+2+1) more Game Turns over three more Galactic Cycles.

8.2 Cycle Initiative
If the Second Player controls fewer Colonies than the First Player at this time, then the Second Player becomes the new First Player during the next Galactic Cycle. If the number of colonies is tied or if the First Player has fewer Colonies than the Second Player, the player order remains unchanged.

The Second Player with fewer Colonies therefore gets a “double turn” as the Second Player during the previous Galactic Cycle and the First Player of the current one. Note that the players could swap again at the end of the next Galactic Cycle!
9.0 How to Win

If, at the end of your opponent’s Player Turn, you control their Homeworld hex, you immediately win a glorious and decisive sudden death victory.

Since you have to control it at the end of their turn, that means that, after you capture it, your opponent will have a chance to reinforce their Homeworld and engage you in combat there and, at the very least, contest your control before you can declare victory.

If neither player achieves a sudden death victory, then at the completion of the last Game Turn (i.e., after both players have exhausted their pool of Operations chits and the last one is removed from play) the game will be won by scoring Victory Points.

- Each friendly-controlled Planetary System hex is worth 1 Victory Point.
- Each Colony marker you have in play is also worth 1 Victory Point, even if enemy units contest that hex at the end of the game.

The winner is the player with the most Victory Points. In the case of a tie, the winner is the player with the most units on the map. If that is also tied, the game is a draw.

At the end of the game, Ashley controls 5 Planetary System hexes, 4 with her Colony markers present for a total of 9 Victory Points. Sean controls 4 Planetary System each with his Colony marker present for a total of 8 Victory Points. The remaining systems are either empty or contested by both players and do not have Colony markers present. Ashley is the winner!

10.0 Terrain

Space is filled with matter and gases that can affect movement and combat. Represented in each hex on the map is one of the terrain types listed on the Terrain Effects Chart on the Player Aid mat.

Technically, a hex isn’t filled completely with that particular terrain type, but enough of it exists so that it has an impact on units.
Special Terrain Feature Notes

**Asteroids**: It only costs 1 Movement Point to enter an Asteroids hex, but doing so ends that ship’s movement for that Player Turn. There is no effect or penalty for leaving an Asteroids hex. Fighter Attacks (▲) strike only on a 3, but inflicts 2 Hits each when they do. Beam Attacks receive a -2 Dice Roll Modifier (DRM).

Fighters in Asteroids cannot fly at their normal combat velocity, but they are more difficult for point defense to detect and engage.

**Clear**: This is the only type of terrain where interception of moving units can occur (see 5.5). Fighter Attacks (▲) strike on a 5 or 6.

**Dust Cloud**: It costs 2 Movement Points to enter. Fighter Attacks (▲) strike only on a 6. Beam Attacks receive a -2 Dice Roll Modifier (DRM).

**Homeworld**: These named, color-coded hexes are considered Clear for movement, intercept, and combat purposes. These hexes can be reinforced even when enemy ships are present (see 6.2), and their loss can trigger a sudden death ending (see 9.0).

**Nebulas**: It costs 2 Movement Points to enter a Nebula hex from a Non-Nebula hex, but only 1 Movement Point to enter it from another Nebula hex. Fighter Attacks (▲) strike on a 2, 3, or 4. Beam Attacks are resolved one column to the left but never lower than the 1-2 column.

Sean activates a ship that is adjacent to a Nebula hex. The ship has a Movement Allowance of 4. The first move into the Nebula costs two Movement Points. The ship then continues moving through adjacent Nebula hexes at a cost of 1 Movement Point each. The picture shows the Movement Points remaining as the ship moves.
**Planetary Systems:** These hexes are considered **Clear** for movement, intercept, and combat purposes. These hexes are worth Victory Points when controlled and/or colonized at the end of the game (see 9.0).

**Singularity:** Singularity hexes cannot be entered, ever. The six hexes immediately adjacent to Singularity hexes are **Event Horizon** hexes with these special features:

- **Damaged** capital ships cannot enter **Event Horizon** hexes, but all other (undamaged) ships can (including stacks of ships, as long as none of them are damaged) to use the “**slingshot effect**” around the **Singularity** hex (see below).
- It costs 0 **Movement Points** to enter an **Event Horizon** hex; that is, ships can move from one **Event Horizon** hex to any other for free.
- Ships cannot **end** their movement in an **Event Horizon** hex; ships that do so are destroyed. **So be sure your ships have at least enough Movement Points left to exit the Event Horizon hexes and move away from them!**

At both **Singularity** and **Event Horizon** hexes, therefore, ships cannot be intercepted, no combat can occur, and Bases cannot be built there.

*Ashley activates the CA for movement. The first hex of movement is into the Event Horizon of the Singularity and therefore costs 0 Movement Points. The ship moves around the Singularity for free and exits on the other side into a **Dust Cloud** hex, spending 2 Movement Points to enter it. Ashley decides to move her CA no further that **Operations** Phase, even though it still has 2 Movement Points remaining from its Movement Allowance of 4.*
11.0 PLANET MARKERS

The first player to colonize (see 6.1) a Planetary System hex receives the Planet marker which was set up there. Recycled Planet markers are also available (see 6.4). Planet markers remain hidden from your opponent until you use them.

Explained below is the timing and use of each particular Planet marker. Those with a ● on them denote that they can also be played during the opponent’s turn as well as your own.

Effects

ComBots ● (x2): You may play one of these, maximum, at the start of any battle before dice are rolled to add two fighters (▲▲) to your side during both Fighter Steps. You do not need a carrier at that Battle to play this marker.

Boost (x2): Play these at any time during your Operations Phase to receive one ship from your Alpha Zone (selected at random from among those face-down there, if possible) and place it in any hex with a friendly unit. If your Alpha Zone is empty, receive this ship from your Beta Zone instead. If both zones are empty, Boost has no effect.

Intel: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to reveal any combination of up to four units in either player’s Reinforcement Zones. These units remain there face-up.

Energy (x2): Play at any time during your Operations Phase to receive two additional (+2) Operations that turn.

Fixit ● (x2): Play during either player’s Operations or Combat Phases to repair up to two damaged units OR cancel up to two Hits at the end of a single Step during a Battle.

Meteor: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to designate a Planetary System hex and roll one die for each capital unit there (only). A result of 1, 2, or 3 has no effect; a result of 4, 5, or 6 inflicts one Hit on that capital unit.

Redline ● (x2): Play during either player’s Operations Phase. Until the beginning of your next turn, all of your ships receive +1 to their Movement Allowances (thus, ships with a Movement Allowance of 3 can intercept while “Redlining;” see 5.5).
Salvage: Play any time during your Operations Phase to deploy to your Homeworld as a reinforcement (see 6.2; for Bases see 6.5) one unit of your choice from your Scrapyard, if available.

Scout ●: Play at any time your opponent plays a Planet marker to cancel its effect before any dice are rolled or decisions are made regarding it. Discard both this marker and the opponent’s cancelled Planet marker to the cup.

12.0 Variants
These are variants we had fun with during playtesting, so we wanted to share them with you. Each creates some exciting new play opportunities!

12.1 Anarchy Variant Rule
This variant requires a second cup. At the beginning of the game AND each Galactic Cycle, place both players’ Operations chits into that cup. At the end of each Player Turn, one player draws a chit from the cup to see who has the next Player Turn. If your 8/3 Ops chit is drawn, you may still decline to use it (see 4.3) if there are any other Ops chits remaining in the cup (set your 8/3 Ops chit aside until after the redraw, then return it to the cup).

The player whose Operations chit was drawn is the Acting Player for the next Player Turn of the game and receives the number of Ops shown on that marker during his Economic Phase (see 4.2).

When the cup is empty, a Galactic Cycle occurs with each player removing their lowest Ops chit normally and then returning all of the remaining Ops chits to the cup.

Sudden death victory (see 9.0) occurs if, at the beginning of your first Player Turn after your opponent’s Player Turn, you control your opponent’s Homeworld hex. This allows the player who lost their Homeworld one chance to retake it or at least contest its control.

In this variant, the order of Player Turns will be random, but both players will receive the same number. This means one player might receive multiple turns in a row before the other player can respond!
12.2 Random Operations Variant Rule

Operations chits are not used; instead you need to supply your own 10-sided die (d10). A result of “0” is treated as a “10.”

During your Economic Phase (see 4.2), you only receive Ops equal to your controlled Colonies (as usual) and set your Ops Tracking marker on your Player Aid mat accordingly. Your opponent then secretly rolls the d10 and keeps the result hidden for now.

You then start conducting actions and, when you have spent a number Ops equal to or greater than the die result (i.e., if you conduct an action that costs more than 1 Op, such as taking a reinforcement), your opponent tells you to stop and reveals the d10’s result.

If you have spent more Ops than the d10’s result, you must make up the balance owed from the “Colony Ops” shown on your mat. If you do not have enough to pay that cost, you still perform that final (multi-Op) action, but your Operations Phase immediately ends and you proceed to your Combat Phase.

If you still have Ops remaining after the d10’s result is known (from your colonies or Planet markers), you can spend them down normally.

Under this variant, building a Base costs 5 Ops, and you cannot build them any faster than one every other turn.

You alternate Player Turns normally. When your turn is over, take the d10 from your opponent to use during their turn.

The game ends when sudden death occurs (see 9.0) OR at the end of the Game Turn (i.e., both players will have the same number of Player Turns) when any three Reinforcement Zones are empty (i.e., between the two players, three Zones become empty).

Sean is the Acting Player. Ashley rolls the d10 and keeps its result hidden from Sean, who also has 3 Colony Ops points available this turn.

Sean spends one Op to activate a ship for movement. He then spends another Op to move another stack of two ships.
He spends a third Op to repair a damaged capital ship. He announces he is spending four more Ops to deploy a reinforcement unit for a total of 7 Ops (so far).

Ashley then reveals the d10 to Sean, which shows a “5.” Sean has spent 2 Ops beyond that, so he deducts 2 Ops from his 3 Colony Ops, reducing his Ops Track marker down to 1 Op. After spending that last Op, if desired, Sean’s Operations Phase is over. Had Sean received only 1 Colony Ops point this turn, he would have still received his reinforcement unit (even though, technically, he could not afford it), and his Operations Phase would have ended immediately.

Designer’s Notes

During a brief period of unemployment, I designed a few print-and-play games to keep the ol’ designer muscles working. The first Imperial Stars was one of those games. It was a starship combat card game, somewhat like the classic Modern Naval Battles. My unemployment ended before the original Imperial Stars could be finished and it was shoved into a box of prototypes, but its universe continued to roll around in my noggin. Years later, that universe would come alive with VPG’s Forlorn: Hope and Astra Titanus games.

This is the third VPG title in this universe, neither of the previous two bearing the name Imperial Stars, but this one gets the II suffix anyways in honor of that original game, which seems like a fitting tribute to me.

This game started when Alan Emrich commented how my latest submissions had grown in size and were using so many more components than before. I set out to address that situation by designing a small, lean-and-mean game. After listing a few concepts, the one idea that stood out was a smaller, faster space 4X game. Once that was decided, slotting it into the Forlorn/Astra universe was easy.

The first decision was to keep the map to a single 11”x17” sheet and use one of VPG’s trim “four-up” counter sheets. This limited the size of the game and constrained everything else (the map did change over time, however).

My second decision was to randomize the reinforcements instead of letting players purchase from a list of units. This put a little chaos into the process and forced players to work with what they were given instead of picking a perfect
Developed by Alan Emrich

Imperial Stars II

combination of units. In other words, more like real life
(assuming that the First Space Lord, the player’s alter-ego,
worked like a Navy Admiral). I could therefore be a little
looser with balance and include some inefficient (for their
cost) units. Dividing the reinforcements into two groups was
a natural decision. The two sides were given similar ships,
but with some subtle differences. A spreadsheet was used to
balance each counter mix, followed by intense playtesting.

I then worked on the basic unit types and some default
values. Originally, there were no Industrial Platforms. Instead
there were Repair Vehicles that could shuttle from system to
system and fix damaged capital ships. But players didn’t use
the RV as intended, which just goes to show that playtesters
are much craftier than designers. (The very first version
submitted to VPG had no stacking limits... wow, that was
not a good idea!)

I couldn’t decide if the attacker or defender should assign
damage in space battles, so I went with both and/or none of
the above. Splitting damage assignment between two types
of units implied at least two phases of combat. Early pushing
around the counters showed that carriers needed an extra
battle phase, which added some additional decision making
about targeting carriers during the first carrier phase.

Early decisions influenced later elements of the design.
Including escorts and capital units in the original counter
mix implied that escorts needed to do something, which
led to the idea that the escorts having to be first targeted by
attacking fighters.

The original map was the Sector 1 map, albeit with some
differences. It originally only had asteroid hexes. (I’m a big
believer in terrain, even in space, so asteroids in this game are
cinematic and not realistic.) Nebulas were added to break
up the terrain type and offer some variety. Dust clouds came
next, but it crowded the map, so another map was designed to
feature that terrain type. Yet another terrain type was needed;
black holes were a natural, but they originally operated like
quicksand, which slowed the game down. Slowing the game
down was not an option, so they became a superhighway into
your opponent’s space. Perfect!

The concept of Operations has been in the game from the
first version, but the way they were generated and the exact
mix has undergone substantial changes. The balancing of the
number of Ops available to each player was an important task, since it drove the game length as well as being the foundation of each player’s turn. Spreadsheets only took it so far and some numbers were tweaked during playtesting. Alan Emrich added the Anarchy optional rule during development. Good call, Alan (but I named it).

Thank you for reading this and for purchasing Imperial Stars II. I hope you enjoy it. As usual, feedback, questions and comments are welcomed. I can be found on ConsimWorld.com in the VPG forum or on BoardGameGeek.com, username anarchy. My email is makerofgames@gmail.com; feel free to drop me a line.

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**Sequence of Play**

1. **Economic Phase (4.2)**
   - Count your controlled Colonies, add your Ops chit (can redraw the 8/3)

2. **Operations Phase**
   - Move ships (5.0), colonize (6.1), deploy reinforcements (6.2), repair damaged capital units (6.3), recycle (6.4), build a Base (6.5)

3. **Combat Phase (7.0)**
   - Steps in a Round:
     1. Colony Abandonment Step (7.1)
     2. First Fighter Step (7.2)
     3. Beam Attack Step (7.3)
     4. Second Fighter Step (7.4)

4. **Housekeeping Phase (8.0)**
   - 1. Countdown of Ops chits
   - 2. Galactic Cycle Initiative?

**Recycle Operations (6.4)**

You can recycle destroyed units in your Scrapyard for various benefits:

- **Gain Operations**: For every two Combat Strength points, you immediately gain one Ops point.

- **Gain Planet Markers**: Once per turn for five Combat Strength points to draw one Planet marker from the cup (if any are there).

- **Restock the Alpha Zone**: Whenever you have two identical ships in your Scrapyard, you may recycle one and place the other, face-up, in your Alpha zone where it can be purchased as a Reinforcement (see 6.2; for Bases see 6.5).

**Planet Markers (11.0)**

The first player to colonize (see 6.1) a Planetary System hex receives the Planet marker which was set up there. Explained below is the timing and use of each particular Planet marker. Those with a ⚫ on them denote that they can also be played during the opponent’s turn as well as your own. Discard used Planet markers to the cup where they await recycling (see 6.4).

**Effects**

- **ComBots● (x2)**: You may play one of these, maximum, at the start of any battle before dice are rolled to add two fighters (▲) to your side during both Fighter Steps. You do not need a carrier at that battle to play this marker.

- **Boost (x2)**: Play these at any time during your Operations Phase to receive one ship from your Alpha zone (selected at random from among those face-down there, if possible) and place it in any hex with a friendly unit. If your Alpha zone is empty, receive this ship from your Beta zone instead. If both zones are empty, Boost has no effect.

- **Intel**: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to reveal any combination of up to four units in either player’s Reinforcement zones. These units remain there face-up.

- **Energy (x2)**: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to receive two additional (+2) Operations that turn.

- **Fixit ● (x2)**: Play during either player’s Operations or Combat Phases to repair up to two damaged units OR cancel up to two Hits at the end of a single Step during a battle.

- **Meteor**: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to designate a Planetary System hex and roll one die for each capital unit there (only). A result of ▲, ▼, or ▼ has no effect; a result of ▼, ▼, or ▼ inflicts one Hit on that capital unit.

- **Redline ● (x2)**: Play during either player’s Operations Phase. Until the beginning of your next turn, all of your ships receive +1 to their Movement Allowances (thus, ships with a Movement Allowance of 3 can intercept while “Redlining;” see 5.5).

- **Salvage**: Play at any time during your Operations Phase to deploy to your Homeworld as a reinforcement (see 6.2; for Bases see 6.5) one unit of your choice from your Scrapyard, if available.

- **Scout ●**: Play at any time your opponent plays a Planet marker to cancel its effect before any dice are rolled or decisions are made regarding it. Discard both this marker and the opponent’s cancelled Planet marker to the cup.

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