Stardrifter

a space opera role-playing game

BASE RULEBOOK

by

David Collins-Rivera

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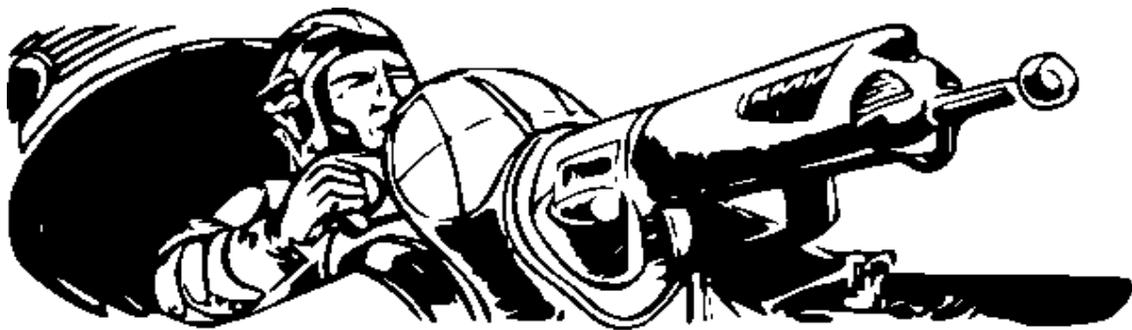
Stardrifter Role-Playing Game Base Rulebook v0.04.3

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The development home for this game can be found at [Gitlab.com](). Join us there; submit bug reports (typos and such), and your ideas for new rule features. Get involved, and help shape the future!

Check out [DavidCollinsRivera.com]() for much more *Stardrifter*, and discover a whole new galaxy of adventure!

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Introduction

"*What is this game, anyway*?"

It's a natural question, but I'm not sure the answer is mine to give.

I do know that *Stardrifter* is *not* a game that tries to be all things to all people. It is locked to a specific genre and setting; and though it may be adaptable, it hasn't been designed with modularity in mind. The basic rule set (the game *engine*, as it were) is not divorced from the rest of it. If you play *Stardrifter*, you're playing a particular sort of game. This includes its space opera trappings, but more comprehensively, it covers an approach to role-playing itself.

I also know this isn't a game for casual players. Certainly, it can be tailored that way, and one-shot adventures are not only possible, but very enjoyable. Just as with most games, though, this one only truly blossoms when the campaign has depth. That means time. That means players and game masters who put in that time. And in *Stardrifter*, that means *character* and *plot* are valued over number-crunching and dice-

rolling. Those things can be fun, and you'll get to do them here, but they aren't the game.
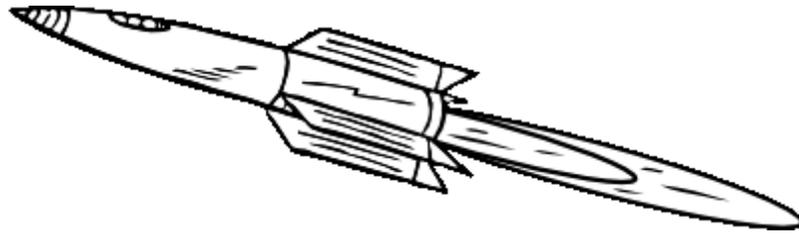
Stardrifter isn't about complexity for its own sake. Rules that fail to enhance the experience should be avoided or modified; rules are only tools that allow the game to be played, and broken tools shouldn't be used. Some of the rules might not work well for you; some might be a poor fit for your group's playing style, while others may seem irrelevant, or even nonsensical. In all circumstances, the rules are less important than the experience. Your campaign and gaming style should reflect that.

Consequently, *Stardrifter* is *not* a game for people who require a rule for every conceivable circumstance. No RPG can cover all situations, but this one, especially, assumes that game masters and players alike are creative, dynamic, interesting people; folks who delight in taking what an adventure has to offer, and turning it to their advantage with the whatever is at hand. *Skills* and *Abilities* are meant to be interpreted and applied in new, unusual ways. Situations are intended to be assessed and discussed, and their solutions negotiated. Players should quiz the NPCs, each other, and the GM, both in and out of character. They should ask and ask and *ask*.

So if you pin me down and ask-ask-ask, then I think *Stardrifter* is a dialog. A conversation. It's a place for the dreamer and raconteur alike. It's where adventure, drama, comedy, and tragedy all live side-by-side.

It's whatever you make of it, so let's get started!

Dice

To create your character in *Stardrifter*, and play them throughout the game, you will need a set of **polyhedral dice**; that is, a set of dice that have **4**, **6**, **8**, **10**, **12**, and **20** sides. These dice are used to generate random numbers up to the amount of sides each die possesses. These dice are designated as **1d4**, **1d6**, **1d8**, **1d10**, **1d12**, and **1d20** respectively. Multiples of each type are (for example) written as **2d4**, if you are rolling two four-sided dice; **5d6** if rolling five six-sided dice; **3d8** if rolling three eight-sided dice; etc. Sometimes, a roll requires a few extra points to be added, such as **1d6+2** or **3d4+1**, which simply means that you roll the number of dice indicated, and then add the number after the "**+**" sign to the total.

Two ten-sided dice rolled together can generate numbers between **1** and **100**, making them useful for obtaining random percentages, or other numbers that might fall into this range. Two ten-sided dice, used in this manner, are written as **1d%** or **1d100** (since they can create random percentile numbers between **1** and **100**), and *not* **2d10** (which would, instead, be used to generate random numbers between **2** and **20**).

Polyhedral dice may purchased from your local gaming shop, or from many vendors online. Comprehensive usage guides can be found online with the keywords "*using polyhedral dice*", or something similar.

These dice are quite fun to play with, and very simple to use once you get the hang of them. There are also game-focused random number apps available for computers and phones, many of them for free, which can do the same job.

However you go about it, grab yourself some polys, and get to rolling!

Special Rules

Rolling Above 100

Occasionally, in *Stardrifter*, you may need to generate random numbers above **100**; most commonly, for space combat, but possibly for other situations. A few examples of how to do this are as follows:

> **Example**: *A charged particle cannon might do* **Hit Point** *damage (HP) between* **3** *and* **300***. This would be designated as* **3d100***. Obtaining this requires that you roll* **1d100** *three times, and add up the results.*

> **Example**: *A tactical nuclear missile might do HP damage between* **501** *and* **1500***. This would be designated as* **1d1000+500***. You must start by generating a random number between* **1** *and* **1000***. This is done by rolling three ten-sided dice, designating one as the "ones", another as the "tens", and another as the "hundreds". These three are rolled together, or in sequence, then read much as you would percent dice, but with an added number category. Once the sum of the dice roll is obtained, you then add* **500***, to arrive at a total.*

Example: *An in-space collision might do HP damage between **3** and **3000**. This would be designated as **3d1000**. In this case, you would roll **1d1000** (that is, the same three ten-sided dice as mentioned in the example above) **three times**, adding all the rolls together, to obtain a total. Another way to get such a number is to roll **1d1000** once, then multiply it by **3**. Ask your **Game Master** (or GM, as they are also known) which method is preferred.*

Second Chance Rolls

Another rule intrinsic to the game, and used in particular circumstances, is the **Second Chance** die roll. Those familiar with the concept of *rolling with advantage* from other game systems will see similarities here, but there are some important differences.

Certain characters (or, at the discretion of the GM, *any* characters in certain situations) who fail a **Skill**, **Save**, or **Attribute** check, are allowed, in very specific circumstances, to roll again if they want, in hopes of getting a better number. This is purely optional for them, but if they choose to do it, they *must* accept the result of the second roll, regardless of the number generated, even if it's worse than the first roll.

Second Chance rolls are not adaptable from one statistic to another; if a character is allowed Second Chance rolls for their **Skills**, for instance, they do not get Second Chances on their *Attributes* and *Saves* as well.

Additionally, Second Chance rolls cannot be *stacked*; that is, if a character seems to be entitled to multiple Second Chance rolls in a particular situation, they can, in fact, only have one. Second Chance does not mean *Third* or *Fourth* Chance.

Example: *Gia has the **Groundpounder** Background, and during an adventure, she lands on a terraformed world. Once there, she learns that a dam is about to burst under heavy rains. Gia will need her **Engineering** Skill to stop a tragedy! Because of her Background, she can get a Second Chance*

with any Skill in which she's trained, whenever she's on a planet. She is also allowed a Second Chance roll in this situation because Engineering is actually her **Prime Skill**. Reading this literally, she would have **two** Second Chance rolls coming for the attempt to fix the dam, but that is not actually the case: if you are allowed a Second Chance roll at all, you only get one.

Rolling Up A Character

Quick Overview

A basic philosophy of *Stardrifter* is that statistics are just numbers, and numbers are *not* your character. Numbers only represent what they might be able to do in certain situations. *This cannot be stressed highly enough.* Don't look to the rules for permission to try something. Don't look to your Character Sheet for the right combination of Skills, Attributes, or bonus numbers. The right way to get things done is almost always in your imagination.

Numbers aren't your character. How you *play* is your character.

There is a blank **Character Sheet** at the end of this book which you can copy out and use. It will help to have this in front of you as you go along, as well as some scrap paper.
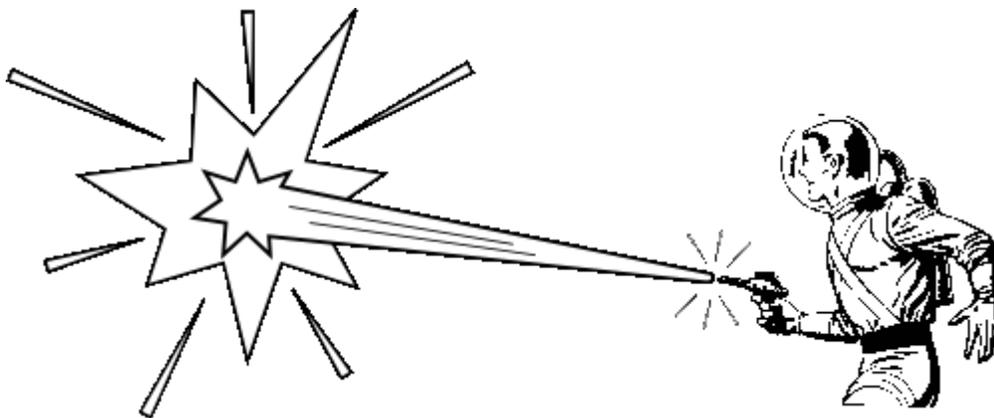
First Off, Don't Worry

Stardrifter isn't especially "crunchy" in the amount of steps or variables to the character creation process, or in regular gameplay. There are only a few elements, here and there, that deliberately add complexity, and these are entirely optional.

If the rules seem difficult to follow, then they must be poorly written, because you are *more* than capable of doing this!

Who Are You?

Pick a name, age, and gender (if applicable) for your character. Imagine what they look like. Are they tall, short, thin, full-figured, or simply average? Are they dark-skinned? Light-skinned? Have they had their hair or skin dyed to an exotic color? Understanding that physical beauty is highly dependent upon cultural norms, are they objectively good-looking? Do they have scars, piercings, tattoos or *glowtoos* (self-illuminating skin art)?

Within reason, your character can have any appearance you want. They can be of any religious or ethnic background. This is a future where anything goes, and you are *not* bound by 21st Century limitations, values, or inhibitions. All the important numeric aspects of a character are on one side of the Character Sheet. This leaves the other side blank, and ready for your character's story. Write down the details of their appearance, and, as you go along in the creation process to determine their other characteristics, you'll have an even larger tapestry to work from. Don't finalize their backstory just yet, since certain aspects of the creation process may give you some good ideas!

Note:

By this time period, a third gender of human is universally recognized throughout settled space: *enby*, or non-binary. Enbies may use any pronouns and honorifics they choose, but the following are common:

Pronoun/Honorific	Equivalent To
xe (pronounced *zay* or *ksay*), **they**	**he** or **she**
xem (pronounced *zem* or *ksem*), **them**	**him** or **her**
xyr (pronounced *zair* or *ksair*, rhymes with air), **their**	**his** or **hers**
Xur (pronounced *zoor* or *ksoor*), **Mx**, **none**	**Mr**, **Miss**, **Mrs**, **Ms**
xal (pronounced *zahl* or *ksahl*, rhymes with doll), **ser** (rhymes with air)	**sir** or **madam**
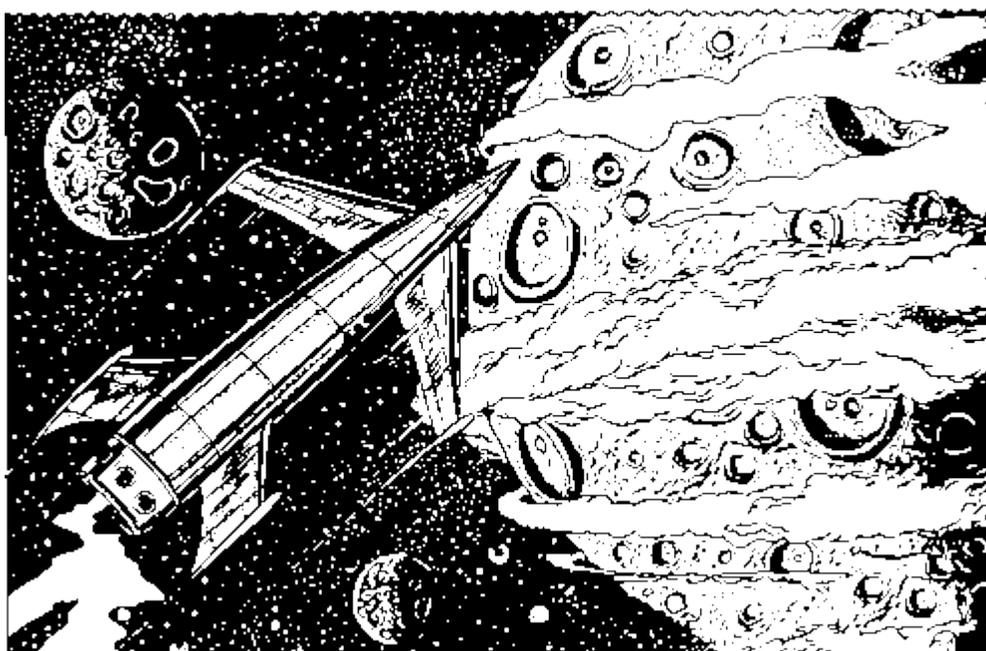
Character Overview

What follows are the steps needed to create your *Stardrifter* character. They describe what the next few chapters cover, and in what order to proceed. One good way to go through the list is to read a step, then turn to the chapter in the book that it refers to, follow those directions, and then return here. You'll find yourself working through the list quickly, and when you reach the end, your character will be ready to play.

Step 01: Attributes

Decide which method you want to use to generate your character's **Attributes**, and the optional *Initiative Differential* (ID) for each. There are several methods described for obtaining these numbers.

Do you have a vision of your character that you want to build toward? Would you prefer to let chance dictate your character's Attributes, and then challenge yourself to assemble a cool person out of them? Or maybe the Attributes don't really matter that much to you. If so, there's an option to roll *one* die for some perfectly serviceable pre-rolled statistics. All of these methods will generate viable Attributes for your character.

Step 02: Saves

From the Attributes, you next generate your **Saves**, and their (optional) IDs. Saves are last-ditch numbers you roll against in certain situations where success or failure truly matter. This includes life and death stuff, but also, more mundane or unexpected things. The choices you make as you roll your character up will have an effect on these numbers, but the way you *play* will determine how often you even need to make a Save check.

Step 03: Background

Choose a **Background** for your character. Backgrounds have a couple of purposes in the game. Right off the bat, they offer some free Skills (which we'll cover in **Step 05**, so don't sweat it just yet). These freebies are a reflection of your character's starting point in life. Backgrounds influence your character's base *HP* and *Stamina* (described in **Step 04**). Finally, Backgrounds can point the way toward other Skills that you may wish to choose (or not), when the time comes.

Step 04: Hit Points and Stamina

Determine your character's **Hit Points** (HP) and **Stamina** (STAM). Collectively, these scores are a stylized reflection of how much physical damage your character can take before dying. They can be increased (or decreased) over time, depending upon the choices you make as you progress in the game. Every character starts with **8 HP** and **8 STAM**, but your Attributes can, and your Background definitely *will*, modify those numbers.

Once again, don't get too hung up over high scores here. Having lots of HP and STAM are advantages, but they simply can't replace smart in-game choices. A character in a firefight needs all the HP they can get. A character who *avoids* the fight can probably make do with less.

Step 05: Skills

Choose your **Skills**, and their optional IDs. In addition to their free Skills, each new character gets **4 Character Points** (CP) at rolling-up time, with which to obtain additional Skills. You can use these to help realize your vision for the character.

What do you want this person to be like? Based upon the history you came up with, what are their goals? Do you know if there is a Skill deficiency among the player characters as a whole? Keeping all these things in mind, now is the time to choose. Depending upon your Background, you may also be able to choose a Prime Skill, which offers certain advantages. This game is largely Skill-based, so giving this step some time and attention is important.

Step 06: Money

Your starting **Money** is a type of future currency called the *Q*. Player characters start the game with 2500*Q*, with which they can purchase Weapons, Armor, and other stuff. It's important to understand how much money your character has available, especially in advance of **Step 07**.

Step 07: Equipment

Now that you have some money in your pocket, consult the list of your chosen Skills, and purchase any **Equipment** that will help you perform them (assuming you can afford it just yet). In Stardrifter, Equipment includes gadgets and gizmos, but also Weapons and Armor.

Alternatively, you can wait and save your *Q* until you know what sort of equipment you'll need for a particular adventure, and buy it then. Travel expenses are a

consideration; tickets from one system to another can sometimes be expensive. There are also basic living costs associated with this future time. And let's not forget the occasional bribe: it's amazing what greasing the right palms can sometimes accomplish!

And that's it. Not too bad, right? Your character is now ready to travel across the stars. They can seek their fortune, discover long-hidden secrets, oppose ruthless enemies, and (if the dice are kind) survive to tell the tale!

Attributes

Attributes are an abstract representation of both the physical and mental aspects of a character. You will find them listed on the bottom right-hand side of your Character Sheet. *Stardrifter* uses the classic six statistics, as follows:

Intelligence (INT): The basic ability to understand things, and figure out solutions to problems, especially under pressure.

Wisdom (WIS): General insight into situations and human behavior.

Charisma (CHA): Personal presence, and an ability to impress people.

Strength (STR): Physical power. Each point of STR allows a character to lift up to 10 kilograms from floor to chest height, under 1 Terran gee of gravity.

Constitution (CON): Physical fortitude.

Dexterity (DEX): Overall nimbleness and coordination.

Obtaining Attributes

There are three general directions you can go in to get Attribute scores for your character. Any of these methods will work.

1. Use a pool of **Character Points** (CP), from which you allocate numbers to each Attribute.
2. Roll dice, and assign the numbers where you like (and there are several different methods you can try).
3. Roll one die to obtain a set of pregenerated Attributes from a list.

However you go about it, once you have the these numbers, place them on your Character Sheet under **Attributes**, in the bottom right corner.

1.) Pool of Character Points

You start with a pool of 75 CPs and allocate them as you wish among your Attributes. All six Attributes must get some points, with a minimum of 3, and a maximum of 18. This will allow for better-than-average Attribute scores all around, or for a couple of truly great numbers along with a few that are less impressive.

One advantage of this method is that a character may be more-or-less tailored to your vision. If you want a pilot, putting extra points into DEX is probably a good idea. If you want to create a fighting type, putting more points into STR or CON could be useful. Granted, you might have to short-change other Attribute scores to get those high numbers, but, hey -- everything has a cost.

2.) Roll Dice (Use one of these dice-rolling methods, or another of your GM's preference.)

- *Method 01*: Roll **3d6** and add them together. Roll them a total of six times, placing each number under any Attribute on your Character Sheet that you want. At that point, you may (but do not have to) bring the lowest number under up to **10**.

- *Method 02*: Roll **4d6**, dropping the lowest die. Add the remaining dice together. Do this a total of six times, and place the final numbers under any Attribute on your Character Sheet that you want.

- *Method 03*: Roll **3d6** and add them together. Roll them a total of six times, placing each number under any Attribute on your Character Sheet that you want. You may then (and *only* then) reroll any or all of these numbers, but you *must* accept the second roll, whatever it is, and you cannot swap the numbers around. Whatever you roll at this point, for whichever Attribute, is what you keep.

3.) Roll One Die

The following is a table full of random Attribute numbers. Roll **1d20**, and consult the following list for your character's Attributes, and Saves. Place these numbers on your Character sheet under **Attributes** and **Saves**, in the lower right corner. These scores have been obtained using the above methods. Additionally, each number has its Initiative Differential (**ID**) included, which is used with the *Advanced Initiative* rules. If your GM is not using these rules, the ID numbers may be ignored. (See next page.)

ROLL 1d20	INT/ ID	WIS/ ID	CHA/ ID	STR/ ID	CON/ ID	DEX/ ID	SAVE: Mental	SAVE: Physical
01	13/07	12/08	10/10	15/05	12/08	13/07	12	13
02	15/05	12/08	13/07	10/10	14/06	11/09	13	12
03	08/12	10/10	11/09	16/04	15/05	15/05	10	15
04	13/07	09/11	11/09	13/07	13/07	16/04	11	14
05	12/08	11/09	17/03	10/10	13/07	12/08	13	12
06	10/10	06/14	11/09	10/10	11/09	10/10	09	10
07	12/08	08/12	11/09	07/13	07/13	10/10	10	08
08	09/11	07/13	11/09	10/10	12/08	11/09	09	11
09	13/07	14/06	10/10	06/14	14/06	13/07	12	13
10	13/07	14/06	10/10	09/11	12/08	12/08	12	11
11	11/09	14/06	13/07	10/10	16/04	13/07	13	13
12	06/14	10/10	18/02	17/03	13/07	08/12	11	13
13	11/09	08/12	09/11	13/07	16/04	11/09	09	13
14	11/09	09/11	13/07	15/05	16/04	11/09	11	14
15	17/03	11/09	11/09	10/10	13/07	11/09	13	11
16	11/09	14/06	13/07	10/10	16/04	13/07	13	13
17	09/11	15/05	12/08	13/07	14/06	11/09	12	13
18	10/10	17/03	13/07	11/09	15/05	14/07	13	13
19	13/07	11/09	08/12	10/10	09/11	11/09	11	10
20	12/08	14/06	15/05	14/06	16/04	16/04	14	15
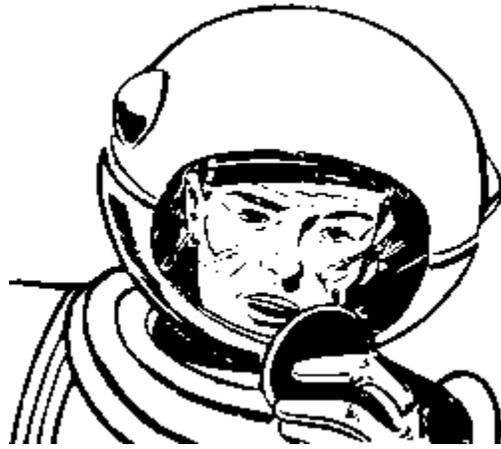
Initiative Differential

The **InitDiff**, or **ID**, is a number based upon an Attribute or Skill score. You'll find a space for them next to each of these scores on t`he Character Sheet.

ID is used for the optional *Advanced Initiative* game mechanic that allows for finely-tuned action sequences. ID acts as a modifier upon the standard Initiative roll, reflecting how good or bad a particular score is. If *Advanced Initiative* is used, and the GM calls for an ID for a particular Attribute, Save, or Skill for determining the order of initiative, the player rolls **1d20**, and adds that ID number to the die roll. Lowest number goes first, then the next lowest, and so on.

To obtain IDs, take the Attribute or Skill score, and subtract it from **20**.

> **Example**: *Sopel, a new adventurer, has the following Attribute scores, and the derived IDs for each:*
>
> - *INT 12,* **ID 8** *(20-12=8)*
> - *WIS 10,* **ID 10** *(20-10=10)*
> - *CHA 14,* **ID 6** *(20-14=6)*
> - *STR 11,* **ID 9** *(20-11=9)*
> - *CON 16,* **ID 4** *(20-16=4)*
> - *DEX 12,* **ID 8** *(20-12=8)*

Very high Attributes, obtained over time, may exceed **20**, but they are still calculated and used in the same way. Since lower is better for Initiative, very low IDs are also better.

> **Example**: *After a lot of adventuring, Sopel now has the following Attributes and IDs:*

- *INT 13, ID 7 (20-13=7)*
- *WIS 12, ID 8 (20-12=8)*
- *CHA 18, ID 2 (20-18=2)*
- *STR 15, ID 5 (20-15=5)*
- *CON 22, **ID -2** (20-22=-2)*
- *DEX 20, **ID 0** (20-20=0)*

Again, the ID game mechanic is for use with an *optional* rule, which means it is also optional. Check with your GM to see if they will be using ID in their campaign; if not, you may safely ignore it. (See the chapter on **Combat** for more about ID.)
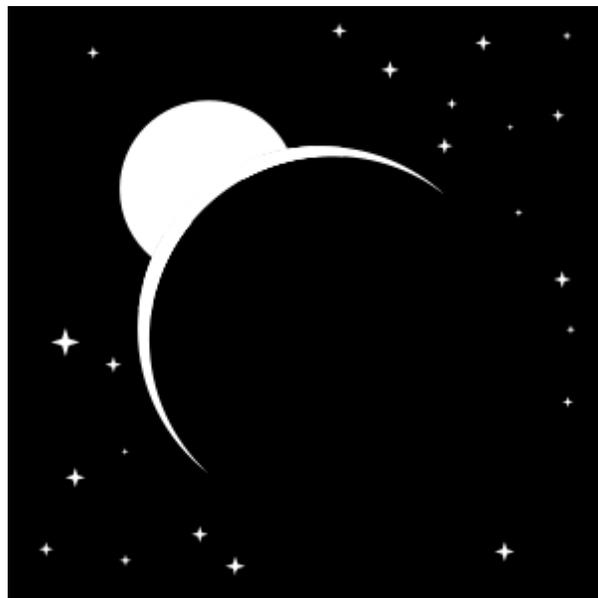
Save Checks

Save checks (or just Saves) are last ditch numbers to roll against in order to reduce or avoid the effects of bad and otherwise unavoidable situations. This can refer to almost anything, ranging from explosions, to surviving a spell of vacuum exposure without a suit; from being conned by a grifter, to resisting the effects of brainwashing; from failing a written exam, to ending a blind-date on a sour note.

Like other types of checks (Attribute and Skill), Saves are rolled with **1d20**. Equal to or less-than means success; greater-than means failure; and modifiers may well apply.

Save checks come in two varieties, **SAVE: Mental** and **SAVE: Physical**. Their scores are obtained as follows:

- **SAVE: Mental**: Add up your character's INT, WIS, CHA, and divide by 3 (rounding up). Put this number under SAVE: Mental, in the lower right corner of your Character Sheet.

- **SAVE: Physical**: Add up your character's STR, CON, DEX, and divide by 3 (rounding up). Put this number under SAVE: Physical, in the lower right corner of your Character Sheet.

Save scores can be improved over time by increasing a character's Attributes via CPs, which are obtained through adventuring. When an Attribute is permanently increased (or *decreased;* it's a dangerous galaxy), Save scores must be re-calculated using the above methods.

> **Example**: *An enby character named Bea tries climbing the perimeter fence of an enemy compound. It's in a remote spot on a mountaintop. Unfortunately, it is raining this day, and there are also high winds. The GM imposes a total penalty of **-4** (that's **-2**, each, for the rain and the wind). Bea*

rolls a **12** on their Skill check, against a **Athleticism 01** score of **14**, which would normally be a fine success. Because of that **-4** penalty, though, Bea's modified Skill score is actually **10**. The attempt is a failure. What's worse, the GM determines that, as they're falling, the high winds blow them right over a nearby precipice! This would normally be the end, but the GM decides that, since it's essentially an unavoidable doom, Bea gets a **SAVE: Physical** check to see if they can grab hold of some roots growing right near the cliff. The number under **SAVE: Physical** on Bea's Character Sheet is **14**. The GM decides to be more lenient than I would probably be under the circumstances, and does not impose any negative modifiers to this Save. Bea's player rolls **1d20** and gets a **9**, which is lower than **14**, meaning this is a success. The GM does hand out falling damage to Bea (when they slam into the cliff side while holding on to the roots), but decides they have prevented themself from falling off the mountain. Bea can now crawl to safety.

Example: It turns out the GM is **not** nicer than I am, after all, because Bea's brush with death has left some trauma. They've begun having nightmares about falling, growing increasingly acrophobic. Time goes by, and dire circumstances within the game require Bea to once again scale that same fence, this time to save a friend. It is raining and windy this day, just like last time: what a miserable place! As before, a successful **Skill check**, with appropriate modifiers, is needed to actually climb the compound's fence. This time, though, Bea's fear of heights, coupled with the weather, is a major issue; the GM determines that Bea must first make a **SAVE: Mental** check, to push past this fear. The player rolls a **10**. This is more than the **SAVE: Mental** score on Bea's Character Sheet, which is a **9**. That's a fail. Bea is too overcome with anxiety to even make the attempt, despite how desperate the situation is.

Example: Later on, the weather abates; the rain finally stops, and the wind

dies down. Circumstances with this fence have changed, in other words, so the GM rules that Bea may make another attempt to climb it. Their fear of heights is still very much present, so another **Save: Mental** *check is required. This time, Bea rolls* **1d20***, and gets a* **7***. That's under their* **SAVE: Mental** *score, making this a success. Bea overcomes their fear, and begins climbing. Now they must make a Skill check versus their* **Athleticism 01** *score of* **14***. Because the weather is being more cooperative, the GM does not impose any penalties this time around. Bea rolls a* **9** *on* **1d20***, and very handily climbs the fence. Now...on to rescue their friend!*
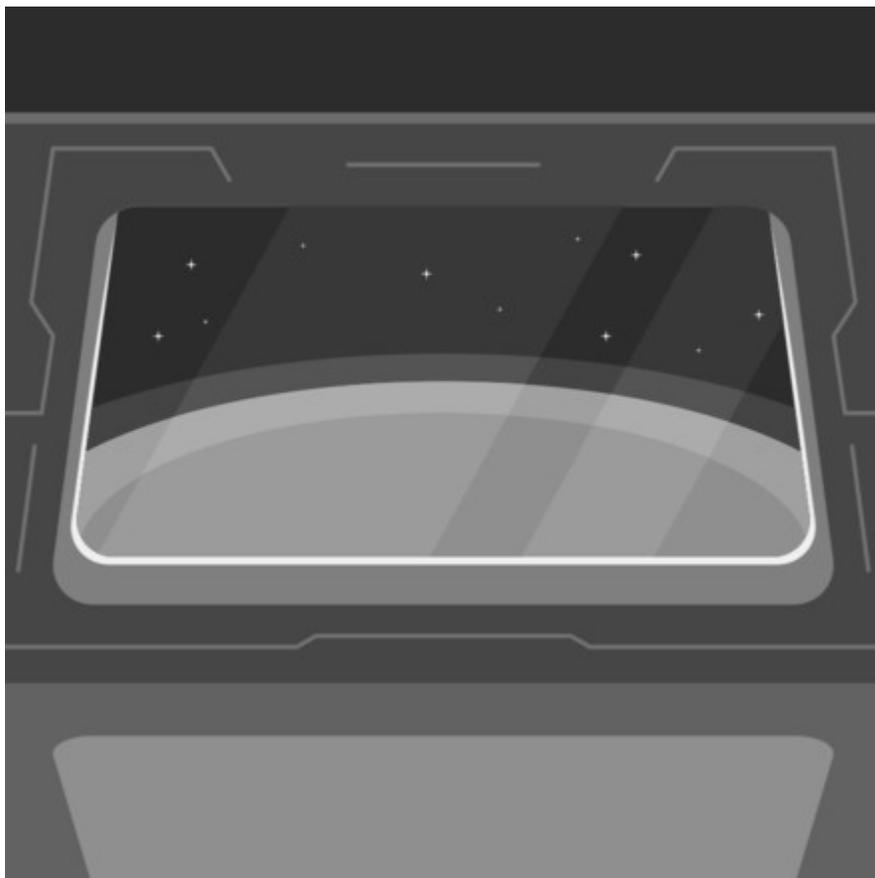
Backgrounds

Backgrounds have a couple of purposes in the game. They offer some free **Skills** right off the bat, based on common experiences that anyone with a similar starting point in life might have. They help determine your character's **Hit Points** and **Stamina**. And finally, they can point the way toward *other* Skills you may wish to consider, since characters with particular histories may be prone to particular professions.

Where did your character come from? What sort of path did their early days put them on? What effect did it produce, mentally and physically? And what have they learned along the way? Backgrounds are tools for determining some of these things, which in turn, can affect others.

Most Backgrounds allow the character to choose a **Prime Skill**, either from the free ones they get, or from anything else on the Skill list for which they are eligible. Once chosen, Prime Skills cannot be changed. They do, however, offer certain advantages, not the least of which is allowing characters to start the game with a Skill that is at a higher level than is otherwise possible. (See the chapter on **Skills** for more on Prime Skills.)

Free Skills do not cost anything; the character has them as a matter of course when they are rolled up. Later on, after adventuring and gaining more CPs, players may use them to increase these Skills, just like any others. They can also learn new Skills if they want. And again, a free Skill may be set as a Prime Skill, if desired.

Backgrounds have an influence on characters at the beginning of the game, but less so as things go along. The more adventures a character has, the more their choices help to shape them into different people, possibly people who are very far removed from their beginnings. Backgrounds aren't *Professions* or *Classes*; they don't dictate how a character will do things, they are merely jumping-off points.

A Background can be an easy handle in the beginning. Saying to everyone during the first game, "*Hi, I'm Kinn, a Stationer*," might give them a sense of where you're coming from. After a few games, though, and a few more Skill choices, it might be more appropriate to say, "*Hi, I'm Kinn, a pilot. I grew up on a station, but I haven't been back there in a while*."

In Stardrifter, Backgrounds are *only* that. They help determine who you were, not who you are, and definitely not who you will be.

Background Types

Spacer

Spacers, as the name implies, travel through the vacuum of outer space for their

living. Specifically, they are people with civilian backgrounds who have worked on commercial vessels before. These might include cargo haulers, cruise liners, communications starships, repair boats, private yachts, personal security vessels, emergency response vehicles, and more.

Both starships and spaceboats are the province of Spacers. They know how to use vacuum suits, and can usually move around and work in zero gravity with confidence. They can often maintain, repair, or even improvise technical solutions for damaged space vessels. They can also apply those Skills elsewhere. Spacers can commonly handle freight safely and securely, using loadbots, pallet jacks, and lifters. And they typically deal with a dizzying number of regulations and civil servants found in ports-of-call throughout the stars.

Spacers get the following free Skills, at Level 01 in each (write them down on your character sheet, under Skills):

- **Exosuit**
- *Either* **Engineering** *or* **Cargo Handling** *or* **Stewarding** (*pick one*)
- *Either* **Bureaucracy** *or* **Social Engineering** (pick one)

If the player chooses one of these as their character's Prime Skill, they start the game at Level 02 in that Skill, for free.

As listed later in the section on **Hit Points and Stamina**, Spacers get **+2 HP** at rolling-up time.

Special Abilities

1.) *Working in space can be dangerous. It's said by some that an old Spacer is a lucky Spacer. To simulate this, Spacers get a **Second Chance** roll on any **SAVE: Mental** or **SAVE: Physical** checks they need to make. This means, whenever a Save check of some kind is called for, the Spacer's player may, at their option, choose to ignore the result, and immediately re-roll the **1d20**.*

They must, however, accept the second result, whatever it is.

2.) *Spacers have extensive training and experience with survival in space. As a result, characters with this Background who are directly exposed to hard vacuum or vacuum-like conditions while not wearing some sort of exosuit, only take* **1/2** *STAM damage (not HP; HP damage happens as normal). Additionally, Spacers exposed to vacuum make their* **SAVE: Physical** *rolls versus* **Stun** *at only a* **-2** *modifier, instead the usual* **-5***.*

Stationer

Stationers hail from one of the many artificial communities in space, likely a large colony structure of some kind. Most of these places have an urban quality to them, with large populations packed into small areas. As such, Stationers tend to be savvy, understanding people and their processes. They come from communities where knowing who to go to when you need something can mean the difference between success or failure.

Though all stations are different from each other, they have certain elements in common, and Stationers can often get along as easily on one as as they can on another. Knowing certain technical Skills allows a Stationer to obtain employment, and to get things done. They might work as civil servants, computer programmers, or health and medical technicians. They might be real estate brokers, renting out apartments; nurses, dispensing medication; plumbers, fixing water heaters and sinks; or con artists, bilking tourists out of their money.

Stationers get the following free Skills, at Level 01 in each (write them down on your character sheet, under Skills):

- **Computers**
- *Either* **Bureaucracy** *or* **Social Engineering** *or* **Lying** (*pick one*)
- *Either* **Engineering** *or* **Medico** (*pick one*)

If the player chooses one of these as their character's Prime Skill, they start the game at **Level 02** in that Skill, for free.

As listed later in the section on **Hit Points and Stamina**, Stationers get **+1 HP** and **+1 STAM** at rolling-up time.

Special Abilities

    1.) As the name implies, Stationers are most comfortable working upon

space settlements. To simulate this, Stationers get **Second Chance** rolls on any of their **Skill** checks, should they want them, while in or on a space station of some sort. This means, whenever a Skill check of some kind is called for while the character is on a station (GM's determination as to what, exactly constitutes a *station*, as opposed to some other sort of settlement), the Stationer's player may, at their option, choose to ignore the result, and immediately re-roll the **1d20**. They must, however, accept the second result, whatever it is, even if it's worse than the first.

2.) Stationers are familiar with the general structure of space settlements, both from a practical and social perspective. As a result, a Stationer may make an INT Attribute check to see if they have some degree of general knowledge, right off the top of their head, about pretty-much any aspect of space stations or the people living on them. If successful, this can, at the GM's discretion, garner some small piece of relevant information or minor trivia apropos to the situation. Such info might range anywhere from the probable location of civic buildings, based on common layouts for stations, to where service tunnels tend to have access points; from where the ritzy or shady parts of town are probaby located, to whether or not a clerk might be amenable to bribery, based on how well or poorly paid people with their same job on other stations tend to be. The GM will determine what can or can't be learned on a case-by-case basis, but a little imagination can go a long way here.
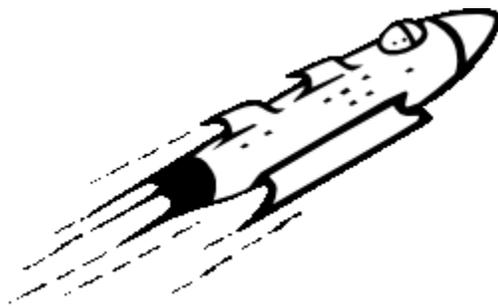
Xmil

Xmil (pronounced *ex-mill*) characters were once part of a standing military or paramilitary body of some sort. Exactly how and when this was is up to the player, but at one time, this character was trained to help protect one of the nations of space, a corporate entity, a religious order, or some other organization. Working long hours, performing difficult labor under bad conditions, communal living, and the ever-present threat of combat have all trained this person for survival while working as part of a team, and surmounting hardships in many different sorts of environments. Xmil characters were taught how to obey orders, respect the chain of command, and achieve their goals despite outside circumstances.

The military has taught this character several basic, but very practical Skills; as such, Xmils are often sought after for the ranks of mercenary bodies, police forces, and private security firms. While some veterans do go in for these sorts of jobs after they muster out (or are kicked out, or desert), the majority actually enter different lines of work, unrelated to their military careers. Those old Skills remain, though, and can be called upon whenever needed.

Xmils get the following free Skills, at Level 01 in each (write them down on your character sheet, under Skills):

- **Exosuit**
- **Combat** (*choose which*)
- **Survival** (*choose which*)

If the character takes one of these free Skills as their Prime Skill, they start the game at **Level 02** in it.

As listed later in the section on Hit Points and Stamina, Xmils get **+1 HP** and **+1 Stamina** right off the bat.

Special Abilities

1.) Xmils have been trained to be aware of dangerous or precarious situations in their environment. They commonly scan for exits and defensible positions whenever they walk into a room; they are able to recognize particularly good places for ambushes or retreats; and they can often notice hidden threats before others do. To simulate this, Xmil characters may roll for *Tactical Insight*, by making a successful **SAVE: Mental** check in order to recognize a situation for what it is, from a military standpoint. For instance, the character does not recognize a trap or other hidden danger for what it is, necessarily, only that the current environment *could* be a good place for such a thing to occur. An Xmil character may use Tactical Insight whenever they want, though no failed rolls may be retried until something changes about the situation in question (GM's determination). The type, and amount of information garnered through Tactical Insight is entirely up to the GM, as are any situational modifiers to the **SAVE: Mental** score being rolled against.

2.) Xmil characters are especially adept at fighting; they've been trained under live-fire conditions, and have learned how to endure pain. All other character types, when they take **HP** damage (*not* Stamina), make a **SAVE: Physical** check in order to take **1/2** damage (see the chapter on **Damage and Healing**). In this same situation, however, Xmil characters make a **SAVE: Physical** check, and if successful, only take **1/4** damage off their HP, rounded up (minimum of 1 point).

Groundpounder

Groundpounders are from a planet, either Terra itself, or one of the other settled worlds in the galaxy. Not all of these have been terraformed yet, and can have very harsh environments. Groundpounders have been raised under Earth-like gravity, with exposure to varying degrees of solar radiation on a regular basis. Groundpounders are generally more in tune with environmental situations and requirements than are others (*e.g.*, checking the weather report before venturing out; understanding what to do in quakes or storms; or even just knowing how to swim).

Groundpounders can hail from cities on a planet's surface, but they are also familiar with the open country and wilderness to a degree. They know about the dictates of a rising and setting sun, and oftentimes have a grasp on scientific principles and methodology from an entirely practical standpoint. Many of the people on terraformed worlds are homesteaders, capable of survival under harsh conditions. Groundpounder characters bring this hardiness to their adventuring lives.

Groundpounders get the following free Skills, at Level 01 in each (write them down on your character sheet, under Skills):

- **Survival** (choose which)
- **Science** *or* **Engineering** (pick one)
- **Exosuit** *or* **Athleticism** (pick one)

If the player chooses one of these as their character's Prime Skill, they start the game at **Level 02** in it.

As listed later in the section on **Hit Points and Stamina**, Groundpounders get **+2 Stamina** at rolling-up time.

Special Abilities

1.) Groundpounders feel centered with their feet on solid ground. To simulate

this, while on planetary bodies, moons, or asteroids of significant size (GM's determination), they get **Second Chance** rolls on any of their **Skill** checks, should they want them. This means, whenever a Skill check of some kind is called for while the character is on one of these bodies, the Groundpounder's player may, at their option, choose to ignore the result, and immediately re-roll the **1d20**. They must, however, accept the second result, whatever it is, even if it's worse than the first.

2.) Famously hardy, Groundpounders can take a few more hits than most folks before really feeling the pain. They can shake their heads and just keep going, when others might be down for the count. To simulate this, Groundpounders get a **+2** modifier on any and all **SAVE: Physical** rolls versus **Stun**.
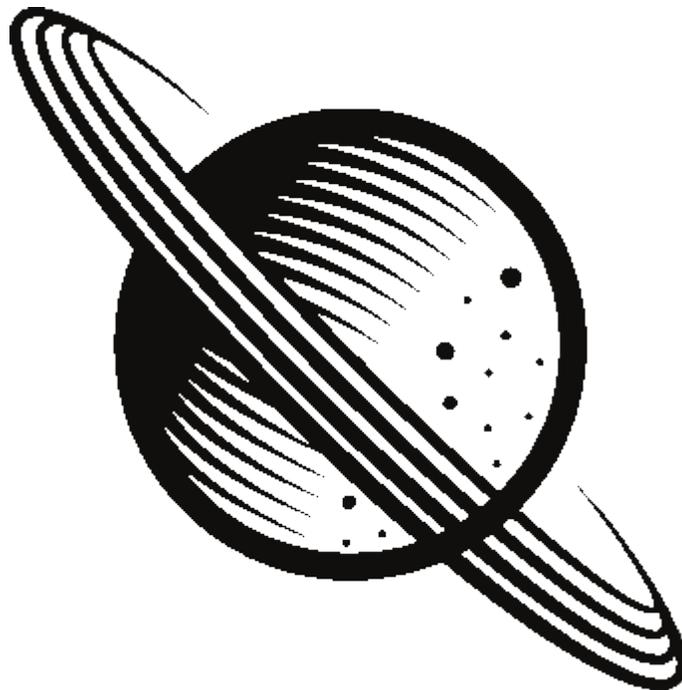
Drifter

Drifters are people who come from everywhere and nowhere. They travel the galaxy, perhaps from job to job, or by flying first class on passenger liners, or even by stowing away on freighter ships, little more than hobos. They can be found on ships, boats, stations, and planets, but rarely in any one place for very long. They have friends (and enemies) everywhere, but few obligations to hold them down. They know how to deal with authority, how to get jobs and information, and how to survive in a galaxy indifferent to human triumph and failure.

Drifters often learn a little about a lot of different things. They can become experts in a subject, just like anyone else, but a wandering lifestyle instills a wide breadth of basic knowledge, often emphasizing adaptability and readiness over specialization. Drifters can be tramps and look the part; but they can also be traveling sales reps in nice suits; hired muscle; landless Noblefolk; or seasonal migrant workers on a series of agricultural worlds. They can be *all* these things, in fact, and much more, doing whatever it takes to get by, wherever the winds of fate might take them.

Drifters get the following free Skills, at Level 01 in each (write them down on your character sheet, under Skills):

- **Bureaucracy**
- **Exosuit**
- **Survival** (choose which)
- *Either* **Cargo Handling** *or* **Engineering** *or* **Science** *or* **Stewarding** (pick one)
- *Either* **Social Engineering** *or* **Lying** (pick one)

Drifters get more free Skills than other characters, but they do *not* get a Prime Skill.

As listed later in the section on **Hit Points and Stamina**, Drifters get **+1 HP** and **+1 Stamina** right off the bat.

Special Abilities

1.) Drifters learn quickly, but not always to great depth. If a Drifter observes someone perform a **Skill** for at least one round which they, themself, do not have, they can attempt to replicate what they've just seen by performing a check versus the pertinent default Attribute associated with the Skill in question, *without the usual negative modifiers*. They must attempt to copy what they've seen immediately, within one minute's time, in order to gain this advantage, otherwise they have all the same negative modifiers as anyone else who tries to do something in which they are untrained. If the Drifter stops performing the Skill, even for one round, or is asked to apply the Skill in a different way than what they saw performed, they also lose this advantage, since they've only been aping someone else.

Example: Huppert is a Drifter, who sees himself as an itinerant artist, traveling the galaxy, painting and drawing. He's a free soul, generally avoiding trouble. One day, however, trouble finds *him*: he and his close friend **Mary-Ellen**, who is a military veteran Xmil, take a wrong turn, and just happen to wander into a mob war shootout! They can't get away, and are being actively targeted by gangsters shooting at everyone they see. the two travelers pick up rifles from a couple of fallen criminals, but, while Mary-Ellen has her old military training to fall back on, Huppert doesn't. He has no *Combat: Rifle* Skill to use, or any other Combat Skill, for that matter (he's a lover, not a fighter). In order to shoot the rifle, he would normally have to roll an Attribute check versus his DEX, with a wicked **-5** modifier, assigned by the GM due to his ignorance of the weapon, and natural disposition. Instead, Huppert's player declares that he watches Mary-Ellen fire her rifle for one round. This allows him to copy what she does, and attack without the **-5** modifier. Instead, all his attacks for this fight are now just straight-up Attribute checks against his DEX, with no penalty for his ignorance. If he holds on to the rifle and uses it again later, he will do so with that **-5** penalty,

unless Mary-Ellen (or someone else) is right there for him to once again copy.

2.) Because their interests tend to shift as often as their locations, Drifters may choose *one* of their known **Skills** to focus upon per day. This allows them to get **Second Chance** rolls for a **24 hour** period with that Skill. At the end of that time, the Drifter's attention inevitably turns to something else, and they can either choose another Skill to focus on, or no Skill at all. They cannot choose the same Skill two days in a row. The GM may require the player to announce the Skill at the start of the day, or may simply allow them to choose it on-the-fly.

Hit Points and Stamina

Collectively, **Hit Point** (HP) and **Stamina** (STAM) scores are a stylized reflection of how much physical damage your character can take before dying. They can be permanently increased (or decreased) over time, depending upon the choices you make as you progress in the game. Every character starts with **8 Hit Points (HP)** and **8 Stamina**, but your Attributes can, and your Background definitely *will*, modify those numbers.

Once again, don't get too hung up over high scores here. Having lots of HP and Stamina are advantages, but they simply can't replace smart in-game choices. A character caught in a firefight needs more HP than one who *avoids* the fight to begin with.

Hit Points

HP is a measure of how much life a character possesses. This is an important concept, so after you read this section, you may wish to review the chapter on *Damage and Healing*, as well as the entries for the **Medico Skill**, and the **Medico Kit** listed under *Equipment*. HP damage heals naturally at a rate of **1** HP per **24** hours of rest.

As stated above, all characters begin the rolling-up process with **8** HP. This is where you start, *not* necessarily where you end. Such things as your CON Attribute score (see below) or your *Background* can alter this number. For now, just write **8** on your Character Sheet (or a piece of scrap paper), under HP, but be ready to change it if necessary.

Stamina

STAM is a measurement of the player character's ability to shrug off a certain amount of damage, and proceed unphased. It's the shake of the head after getting punched in the face. It's the graze of the bullet instead of the sucking chest wound. Most NPCs do not have a Stamina score, so when they get hit, it really *hurts* them. Player characters are different. They're adventurers, they're heroes (or villains; we don't judge). They're made of better stuff, and have the capacity to take a few hits before things start getting serious.

Player characters start the game with a Stamina score of **8**, but this may be adjusted by CON or Background modifiers (see below). For now, just write **8** on your Character Sheet (or a piece of scrap paper), under **STAM**, but be ready to change it if necessary.

In Combat, any damage to a player character gets subtracted from their Stamina *first*. If or when their Stamina runs out, it starts coming off their HP. Healing occurs the same way in reverse: natural or Medico-based Healing is applied to HP first, then to Stamina. Assuming HP is full, Stamina then returns at a rate of **1** Stamina per **5** minutes of rest, or through whatever rate a *Medico* treatment might provide. No STAM may be recovered until all HP has been healed first.
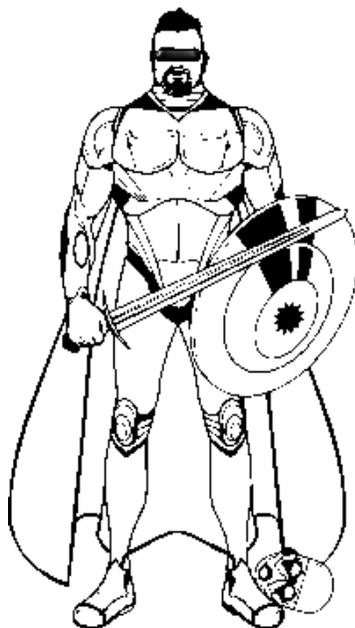
CON Modifiers

Consult your CON Attribute score, and compare it to the list below. If there is an HP and/or Stamina Modifier based upon your CON score, add those numbers to the appropriate sections for both HP and STAM on your Character Sheet. Very high CON provides bonuses here, and very low CON, penalties.

CON	HP Mod	STAM Mod
18	+4	+8
17	+3	+7
16	+2	+6
15	+1	+5
14	+1	+4
13	-	+3
12	-	+2
11	-	+1
10	-	-
09	-	-
08	-	-
07	-	-1
06	-	-2
05	-	-3
04	-1	-4
03	-2	-5

Background Modifiers

This has been previously detailed in the Backgrounds section, but to reiterate, your Background brings modifiers to your HP, your STAM, or both. Consult the table below for your character's Background, and add the appropriate Modifier numbers (if any) to your Character Sheet under the sections for both HP and Stamina.

Background	HP Mod	STAM Mod
Spacer	+2	-
Stationer	+1	+1
Xmil	+1	+1
Groundpounder	-	+2
Drifter	+1	+1

Be sure to read the **Backgrounds** section to learn what other modifiers or special conditions might apply to your character.

Progressing In the Game

Character Points (CP), are used with one of the previously-mentioned methods for character creation, but they are also used throughout the rest of the game, for gradual improvement. Regardless of the exact method of generating Attributes, characters progress in Stardrifter by adventuring and earning CPs, which are then expended upon the improvement of Attributes or Skills.

In Stardrifter, at the end of each adventure (as opposed to the end of each game session), characters receive a small number of CPs. These are awarded by the Game Master for facing enemies, attempting tasks, pursuing large-scale goals, creative problem solving, and excellent role-playing.

> **In and of itself, combat is** *not* **rewarded in Stardrifter. Pursuing your goals will get you CPs, and that** *may* **involve some fighting, but it doesn't necessarily have to, if you use some imagination. Fighting is deadly, and you should avoid it. Doing so will not impact your progression in the game.**

Progression is divorced from *achievement* in this Stardrifter. We learn as much, or more, from our failures in life, as we do from our successes. Characters who make honest attempts at the challenges they face, whether successful or not, have invariably learned from the experience. Players should set their own goals for their characters, rather than having the rules or the GM set them.

At any rate, for the sake of smooth gameplay, *no more than 3 CPs* may be awarded to any character, at any one time.

Possible Character Point awards per adventure:

1. **1 CP**: Surviving an adventure, however it turns out.

2. **1 CP**: Actively pursuing main goals.

3. **1 CP**: Creative problem solving.

4. **1 CP**: Good role-playing.

5. **1 CP**: Miscellaneous reasons (GM's choice).

CPs can be expended, one-for-one, upon any of the following:

- Increasing one **Attribute** by **1 point** per adventure. If that **Attribute** is CON, this increase may also adjust their Stamina or HP. Any increase to Attributes can possibly increase your **Saves**, so these should be recalculted as well.

- Learning up to three new **Skills**, which cost **1** CP each. These must start at **Level 1** (no one begins as an expert).

- Increasing one or more *previously known* **Skills** by up to **3 points** per adventure.

CPs cannot be saved, but must be used up before the character is played again.

Expending CPs to improve Attributes does *not* affect any Skills already known. To increase known Skills, a player uses the character's CPs on them directly. New Skills, however, are learned using whatever the current associated Attribute score is as its base starting number. When spreading CPs between Attributes and Skills, therefore, it might be a good idea to increase the Attribute first, so that the new Skill can take advantage of it for its starting **Skill score**.

Any additions made to Attributes might reflect how the character has been doing

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memory exercises (INT) in their spare time; or maybe practicing meditation (WIS); taking classes in public speaking (CHA); lifting weights (STR); jogging (CON); or getting into juggling (DEX). In this future, a character could also get genetic or cybernetic work done that could account for some or all of these changes. A player may describe the exact process as they wish, reflecting the addition of a CP to one of their character's Attributes.

Skills

By now, you may have an idea about what sort of character you'd like to play. Perhaps you'll even know what kinds of characters the other players intend to play. If at all possible, choose those Skills that will lend shape to the gaming group. Depending upon your Background, you may also be able to choose a Prime Skill, which offers certain advantages. As the game is largely Skill-based, giving this step some time and attention is vital.

An important concept in Stardrifter is that each Skill possesses a **Skill level**, and a **Skill score**.

level is a reflection of the training and experience a character has in a Skill; *score* is a reflection of the character's actual competence. Two people may easily undergo the exact same training (Skill level), yet not end up with the same mastery (Skill score). A character starts any new Skill at **level** 1, but has a **score** based upon that Skill's associated Attribute *plus* their current Skill level.

> **Example**: *Two friends,* **Ghoman** *and* **Terri**, *take a computing class together, looking to get* **Computers*** *as a new Skill. Computers has an associated* **Attribute** *of INT. Ghoman has an INT of* **10**, *while Terri has an INT of* **15**. *Upon graduating from the class, both characters have a* **Skill level** *of* **Computers 1**, *but Ghoman's* **Skill score** *is* **11**, *while Terri's is* **16**. *Terri is smarter than her friend; she simply got more out of the experience, despite the fact that they both received the same training.**

In addition to the free Skills a character gets for their Background at rolling-up time, they also get **4 Character Points** (CPs) at that time, with which to obtain new Skills. Only **1** CP can be expended per *new* Skill learned, meaning all new Skills start at Skill level **1**. Once the character earns more CPs (that is to say, after a little more

adventuring), up to **3** CPs may be pumped into that Skill at any one time.

Skills are based upon **Attributes**. Each Skill name on the list in this chapter has one or more Attributes under it in parentheses. To determine a character's score in a particular Skill, take the Attribute number, and add their Skill level to it. Once an associated Attribute is chosen for a Skill, it cannot be changed.

> **Example**: *Fromo has the Skill* **Cargo Handling**. *Consulting the list, we see that* **Cargo Handling** *can be based on either* **STR** *or* **WIS**, *at the player's discretion. Fromo's not an especially strong guy, so his* **Cargo Handling** *is based on WIS (he intuits the best way to load a ship, rather than move everything around until it fits). Fromo's WIS is* **12**; *this, plus his level of* **2**, *equals* **14**. *Fromo has* **Cargo Handling 2**, *with a score of* **14**. *Whenever asked to do a Skill Check for* **Cargo Handling**, *if there are no other modifiers, Fromo's player must roll* **14** *or lower on* **1d20** *in order to succeed.*

When choosing a Skill, write the name of it down on your Character Sheet under the **Skills** section. Next to it, write the associated Attribute, as detailed in this chapter. All Skills start at level **1**, except for Prime Skills, which start at level **2**. Write the correct number down on your Character Sheet. Now add your Skill level to the associated Attribute, and write the total down in the space for Skill score.

> **NOTE**: If your GM is using the *Advanced Initiative* rules, you'll also want to determine your **Initiative Differential**, or ID, for each Skill. Subtract your Skill score from **20**. That is your ID for that Skill. Write this number down in the section for it next to the Skill score on your Character Sheet.

If you're attempting to use a Skill that you *don't* actually possess, the default score to roll against is (usually) that Skill's associated Attribute at **-2**. You must roll versus this modified Attribute score, equal to or less on **1d20**, in order to succeed. The negative modifier to your score *always* applies when using an unfamiliar Skill in this manner. Your GM will determine, on a case-by-case basis, if **-2** is actually an adequate modifier,

and if other modifiers apply; almost always, the more difficult the challenge, the greater the penalty.

Also remember, the GM can rule at any time that any particular attempt to use a Skill or associated Attribute automatically succeeds or fails, due to the circumstances involved. Some things are too easy to realistically mess up, while others are so hard as to be effectively impossible.

There are no minimum Attribute scores required for any Skill in this game, but some have other Skills as **prerequisites** (prereqs). You must have the required prereqs first, in order to learn the Skill, though if you have enough Character Points (CPs), you may take both the prereq(s) and the desired Skill at the same time.

When first rolling up a character, CPs may only be expended on gaining new Skills, *not* on improving them. Later on, after earning new Character Points, CPs may be placed into any Skill desired, or into new Skills; however, new Skills will *always* begin at level **1**, and stay there until the next time CPs are earned. You don't start off knowing everything.

Prime Skills (see below) allow a character to start at level **2** in something. That is the only way a character may have a level higher than **1** in any Skill right at the beginning. After this, CPs earned while gaming may be expended upon Skills or Attributes, including Prime Skills.
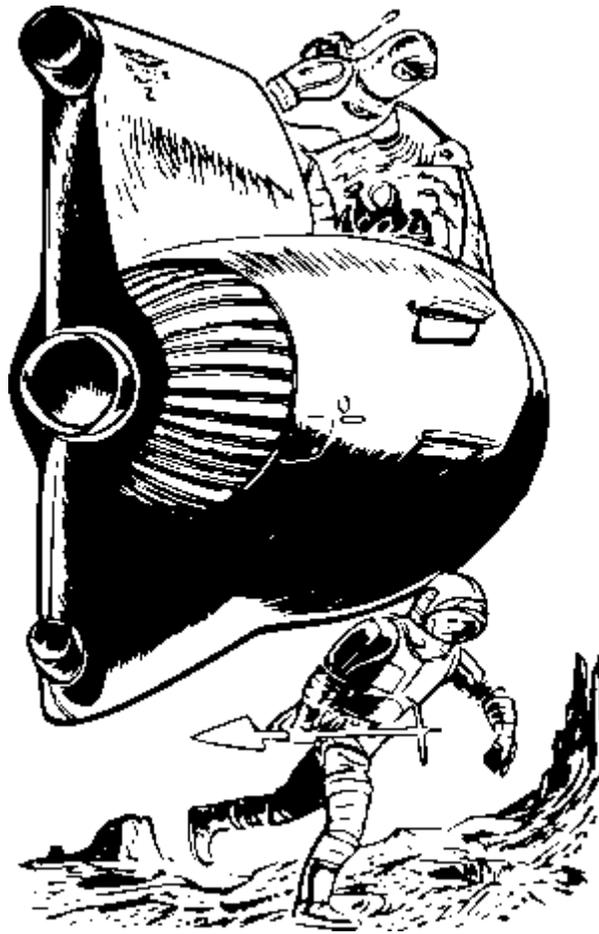
Free Skills

A person's Background determines at least some of the Skills they have when they start. To simulate this, each character Background has a list of free Skills which do not cost any CPs; the character simply has them, at level **1** right from the start. Write these down on your character sheet. (See the chapter on **Background**.)

Prime Skill

All characters, except for those with the **Drifter** Background, may choose one **Prime Skill** when they start the game. A Prime Skill offers several benefits:

- Characters choosing a Prime Skill at rolling-up time begin the game at level **2** in that Skill for free. This is the *only* way to have any Skill at level **2** at the very beginning.

- When rolling against a Prime Skill, the character is allowed a *Second Chance* roll, should they want it. This means, whenever a Skill check of some kind is called for with the character's Prime Skill, the player may, at their option, choose to ignore the result, and immediately re-roll the **1d20**. They must, however, accept the second result, whatever it is, even if it's worse than the first.

- If **Stunned**, a character may still use their Prime Skill at their *normal* Skill score, not at **1/2** their score. (See the chapters on **Combat** and **Damage and Healing** for more information about *Stun*.)

Critical Success and Failure

This is an optional rule.

It can add quite a bit of fun to Skill use, but it does slow things down. The GM may choose to ingore these rules, or to just apply them in certain situations (i.e., only in Combat; or only in non-Combat; or only when it's most dramatic to do so; etc.)

Critical Success (CS) and **Critical Failure** (CF) are possible for every Skill roll. Though they are most dramatically expressed in Combat, any Skill has the potential to succeed or fail with especially good or bad results. Criticals include Skill rolls, as well as substitute Attribute rolls used when the correct Skill is not possessed.

Critical Combat rolls have hard and fast results. They are covered in more detail in the chapter on Combat (incuding detailed examples). Non-Combat Criticals do not have hard and fast results, per se; they are more expressive, often requiring GM ingenuity and creativity to adjudicate.

First off, the following must be understood:

- Any Skill roll of **1** on **1d20**, regardless of any modifiers, is considered a Critical Success.
- Any Skill roll of **20** on **1d20**, regardless of any modifiers, is considered a Critical Failure.
- The Game Master may decree that any particular attempt to use a Skill is either automatically possible or automatically impossible, based upon the circumstances.

This means there is *always* a 05% chance of CS, and 05% chance of CF, in any Skill roll. These are independent of ordinary success or failure numbers. In theory, it's entirely possible, due to high character Skill scores, and good Situational Modifiers (SitMods), to have a modified Success rate of **20** or more on **1d20**. Normally, this

would mean there's no need to roll, since you wouldn't be able to fail. In **Stardrifter**, however, you fail on a *natural* **20**, no matter what other modifiers or Skill Levels you possess, so you must still roll. Remember, also, that a natural **20** is not just a fail, but a Critical Fail. No matter how good you are at your job, or how favorable the circumstances, there's always the chance that something can go wrong. And the opposite is true for natural **1s**: no matter how bleak the situation, there's always the chance you can pull off a Critical Success.

To determine Criticals, when a Skill Check is called for, players add up their character's Skill Level (whichever one they're using; in the case of a substitute Attribute, their Level is zero), and any SitMods the GM assigns. The sum of the Level and SitMods is then added to **1** to determine the chance of CS, and to **20** to determine the chance of CF.

Example: *Gala tries to crack an enemy's computer system, using her* **Computers** *Skill. She has Computers Level* **3**, *with a Skill Score of* **13** *(notated as* **3/13***). The GM determines there is a modifier of* **-1** *on this attempt, due to some light encryption on the target system, so Gala will succeed on a roll of* **12** *or less on* **1d20***. To determine CS and CF, however, Gala's player adds up her* **Computers** *Level with the SitMod. That will be a* **3**, *and a* **-1**, *equaling* **2**. *For CS, Gala's player adds that* **2** *to the number* **1**, *getting* **3**. *Gala will have Critical Success in this attempt on a roll of* **1**, **2**, *or* **3** *on* **1d20***. To determine CF, we add that* **2** *to the number* **20**, *getting* **22**. *We can't roll* **22** *on* **1d20***, so Gala can only have a Critical Fail on a natural* **20**, *since all natural* **20s** *are CFs. In this attempt, Gala succeeds on a* **13** *or less, CS on a* **3** *or less, and CF only on a natural* **20**. *The player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets a* **3**. *That's a Critical Success! In this case, the GM (getting creative) determines that Gala not only succeeds in cracking the enemy database, but is able to install a secret backdoor into the computer system, allowing her to break in again whenever she wants without any need for die rolls.*

Example: *The information Gala obtains in the previous example leads her to another enemy. She tries to break into their computer system, as well. The GM has pre-*

established that this one is using state-of-the-art security, and imposes a **-4** *SitMod this time. Again, Gala has* **Computers 3/13**. *With a SitMod of* **-4**, *she succeeds on a roll of* **9** *or less on* **1d20**. *Her Level of* **Computers 3** *and the SitMod of* **-4**, *added togehter, gets* **-1**. *This* **-1**, *plus* **1**, *is* **0** *(zero). Since you can't roll a* **0** *on* **1d20**, *Gala can only CS on a natural* **1**. *On the other hand,* **-1** *plus* **20** *equals* **19**, *so she will CF on a roll of* **19** *or* **20** *on* **1d20**. *Her player rolls the die, and...bad luck, it's a* **19**! *Still being creative, the GM determines that, not only has Gala* not* *been able to penetrate this system, the target computer has run a back-trace on her physical location! Her enemies now know where she is, though the GM may or may not choose to share this development.**

Example: *When the bad guys learn where Gala is hiding, they send a couple of goons to get rid of her. When the goons confront her, she pulls out a pistol and fires. She has* **Combat: Pistols 1/11**. *The GM determines that the goons saw her reaching, and had time to jump behind the furniture, ruling that there is now a* **-3** *SitMod for her, due to them having partial cover. At* **-3**, *she can succeed on an* **8** *or less, CS on only a natural* **1**, *and CF on* **18**, **19**, *or* **20**. *Her player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets an* **18**. *That's a Critical Failure, and the GM states that her weapon has jammed. Her player now rolls* **1d4** *to determine how many rounds it will take to clear the jam, getting a* **2**. *Gala will be unable to fire at the bad guys for two rounds. They, however, will continue to attack. Not cool!*

Again, these rules are purely optional. The GM can ignore them, use them as is, apply them in a limited way, or only pull them out on special occasions.

Skill Notes

As a rule of thumb, a character can perform most Skills on their list quite adequately *without rolling any dice*, if the attempts are made in ordinary, non-stressful situations. For instance, if there is no great time crunch involved, or some other kind of stressful

situation going on, doing some repairs on a starship's reaction engine with *Engineering: Main Drive* is assumed to be automatically successful -- *if* it's possible at all, depending upon the circumstances. When a character can take their time to do the job correctly, without a deadline, or enemies shooting at them, or whatever, it's assumed they'll eventually get it right. The GM may impose exceptions to this policy at any point, though, and for any reason (including just for fun).

When characters attempt to use Skills which they don't possess, negative modifiers to the associated Attributes can range anywhere from **-1** to **-20**, depending upon the Skill and circumstances involved. A quick and common modifier is **-2**, but the GM may impose anything that seems appropriate. This is in addition to any **Situational Modifiers** (SitMods) the GM may also choose to apply.

Again, these rolls are not Skill checks, since the characters don't actually *have* the Skills in question. Rather, these are Attribute checks, rolled against the associated Attributes of those Skills, as listed in this chapter. Hopefully, it's understood that negative modifiers can add up quickly. While you may not be left with much choice sometimes, attempting to use Skills that you don't actually have is always risky.

Below is a current list of Skills for Stardrifter. Included with each are some possible suggestions for their use, which will hopefully offer some inspiration.

Skill List

Astrogation

(INT)

Prereq: *Science*

Being able to discover one's location in space through the use of navigation software and sensors, and to plot a course for a space vessel to follow. This includes laying a course via *starjump*, as well as through normal space. Many ships use dedicated AIs for this purpose, both in normal space and for starjump, but all legitimate commercial and military vessels (though not necessarily privately-owned, or hired/rented ones) require that someone in the crew also possesses this Skill, so as to double and triple-check the computer, and to act as a manual back-up in case of problems. Those hired expressly for this purpose are usually referred to as *navigators*.

Possible Uses: *Setting a course for a boat or ship; reading and assessing navigation data; estimating the location of other vessels based on known data; teaching* **Astrogation***; assessing space coordinates.*

Athleticism

(STR or DEX, *pick one*)

Being generally accomplished in, or at least knowledgeable about, sports, athletic pastimes, and exercise. For each level of this Skill, a character's Movement increases by **1**; that is, in Combat, this character moves at **7** meters *plus* whatever level of *Athleticism* they have. This Skill also has a positive effect on a character's ability to lift weight; in addition to the normal lifting capacity afforded by STR alone (**10** kilograms per STR point, lifted up to chest height under **1** Terran gee), characters with

Athleticism may lift an additional **10** kgs. per Skill level.

NOTE: Martial arts, boxing, or other forms of hand-to-hand fighting fall under the *Combat: Hand-to-Hand* Skill below.

NOTE: This Skill can be used for throwing objects like balls, rocks, or bottles with accuracy. Range is **10** meters, plus **2** meters per Skill level.

NOTE: While javelins, hammers, discuses, shot puts, and other classical track-and-field projectiles can *technically* be used as weapons, their respective sports don't teach people how to use them that way. If pressed, a javelin's range might be akin to that of a **Pistol (firearm)**, and its damage like a **Sword**. Consult your GM for a ruling on this sort of thing. Most non-martial sporting equipment should probably be considered improvised weaponry at best.

Possible Uses: *Lifting heavy objects safely; running quickly or for a lengthy period; swimming (an uncommon capability in outer space); climbing; tackling an enemy; getting around obstacles quickly and efficiently (parkour); talking sports with other fans as a stand-in for* **Social Engineering**.

Bureaucracy

(WIS)

This Skill is about knowing what office to apply to, what middle manager to call, what forms and applications to fill out, so as not to be lost in the maze of policies, laws, and general practices of the various governments, businesses, and large organizations throughout space. This may occasionally be combined with, or used along side of, such Skills as *Social Engineering* and *Lying*, but it is considered distinct, since most bureaucracies have a mountain of laws and rules that simply *must* be followed, regardless of what individual employees might want to do to help (or hinder) the

character. This Skill can help navigate these rules and policies successfully.

Possible Uses: *Applying for licenses and permits; digging through public records; digging through military records; understanding governmental or industrial structures and policies; navigating the hierarchy of big businesses to find that one person you need to talk to; navigating through the automated messaging and call systems of large organizations.*

Cargo Handling

(STR or WIS, *pick one*)

Loading and unloading freight safely from space vessels, stations, or even on planetary bodies. Characters with this Skill understand how to work effectively and efficiently; how to use loadbots, pallet jacks, small cranes, and other tools vital to the process; and how to do all these things without injuring themselves, others, and any equipment or property.

Possible Uses: *Safely loading or unloading space vessels; working as a cargo hand on space vessels; working on the docks of a space station; working at a spaceport on a planet somewhere; finding a particular crate that's been stored away in a giant warehouse; understanding general procedures of warehouses and shipping depots.*

Combat: Bladed

(DEX)

Fighting with knives, daggers, small swords (including machetes and the like), etc.

NOTE: This Skill does not expressly include throwing these types of weapons with

proficiency.

Possible Uses: *Knife fights; sword fights; (literal) backstabbing; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Bludgeon

(STR or DEX, *pick one*)

Fighting with clubs, pipes, and batons of various sizes, hitting people with chains, cables, or other objects, etc.

NOTE: This Skill does not expressly include throwing these types of weapons with proficiency.

Possible Uses: *Rioting; repelling rioters; mugging people; smashing bottles over heads in a bar fight; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Dual-Wield

(DEX)

The ability to use a weapon in either hand, and attack with both in the same round, without penalty. This is a specialized Skill, limited to weapons which are designed to be used one-handed, such as knives, clubs, swords, pistols, etc. It goes without saying that both hands must be free so that each may hold a weapon. This can be a risky maneuver, but it can also be effective.

A character with this Skill must state they will attempt to use it at the beginning of the round, before they roll any dice. When it is the character's turn, they roll versus their

Combat: Dual-Wield Skill first, before actually rolling to hit. If successful, they may make a normal roll to hit for each of the two weapons in the same round, without any penalties. If they fail, it indicates they got fouled up somewhere; they may choose to *either* make a roll to hit for each weapon in the same round, but with a **-4** penalty on their Skill score for each, *or* they may make only a single attack with one of the weapons, but with a **-2** penalty on their Skill score.

Possible Uses: *Fighting two different opponents at the same time; intimidating opponents; doubling attack rate; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Hand-to-Hand

(STR or DEX, *pick one*)

Fighting effectively without a weapon. Player may state their character uses any martial arts style desired, including just general street brawling. Damage upon a successful hit is equal to **1d4** plus **1** point per *Combat: Hand-to-Hand* Skill level. Any successful attack that does **5** or more HP (not STAM) of damage, requires the target to roll a successful **SAVE: Physical** or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds.

NOTE: *Combat: Hand-to-Hand* is equivalent to *Weapon DC: 1*.

NOTE: Certain types of Armor protect their wearers from Stun effects, no matter how much damage the attack inflicts.

Possible Uses: *Street fighting; tournament fighting; improvised fighting; capturing someone alive; assessing the* **Combat: Hand-to-Hand** *Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Heavy Weapon

(STR or INT, *pick one*)

Being able to use large shoulder-mounted or backpack weapons, such as human-carried artillery, strap-on charpacs, portable railguns, S2A/O missile launchers (Surface-To-Air/Orbit), etc. This Skill assumes a certain familiarity with all these weapon types (which is unrealistic, but hey, it's a game).

NOTE: Heavy Weapons of any kind are almost universally illegal in civilian hands. Possible exceptions include registered mercenaries, civilian weapon suppliers and sales personnel; and members of the Noble class over in the Empire.

Possible Uses: *Battlefield combat; anti-mecha strikes; ground-to-orbit attacks; attacking space vessels from the surface of a station; home defense; teaching this Skill to others*.

Combat: Pistol

(DEX)

Includes firearms and energy pistols such as Stunners.

Possible Uses: *Dueling at high noon; back-alley shootouts; assassination; protecting the targets of assassination; assessing the* **Combat: Pistol** *Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Rifle

(DEX)

Includes firearms and energy weapons.

Possible Uses: *Shootouts; hunting; self-defense; robbery, assassination; assessing the* **Combat: Rifle** *Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Combat: Thrown Object

(STR or DEX, *pick one*)

Allows for accurate thrown attacks with smaller weapons, such as knives, clubs, bottles, rocks, and the like. At the GM's option, items such as swords, chairs, trash cans, or nets can also be thrown in combat (perhaps with modifiers). This Skill may have some crossover with *Athleticism*, especially if throwing something the size and shape of a hard ball.

- Range for smaller objects that have to hit a certain way in order to be effective (such as knives) is **5** meters plus **2** meters per Skill level.

- Range for other types of small objects, such as balls, rocks, or mini-grenades, is **30** meters, plus **10** meters per Skill level.

- Range for larger, heavier objects, such as cinder blocks, bowling balls, etc. is **3** meters, plus **1** meter per Skill level.

Possible Uses: *Quiet attacks in stealthy situations; bar fights; sporting events; tossing grapple lines; throwing grenades; teaching this Skill to others.*

Computers

(INT)

Computers are ubiquitous in this future, so much so that operational use of a computerized interface may be considered universal, for all intents and purposes. It's something that everyone does on a daily basis. Those that learn this Skill, however, can do more than just operate a computer. The *Computers* Skill includes programming and data analysis, networking, hacking/cracking, and general system penetration techniques.

Possible Uses: *Espionage; malicious digital attacks; protecting computerized systems from enemy attacks; learning/operating unusual systems; cracking systems; encryption and decryption.*

Criminality

(INT, WIS, or CHA *pick one*)

This is the Skill of understanding criminal behavior and activities. The character may have taken courses in law enforcement, or might have grown up in a rough neighborhood. Whatever the case, they know how victims can be conned, pickpocketed, and extorted; how stolen goods can be fenced (along with the use of *Social Engineering*, at the GM's option); how victims can be mugged, murdered, intimidated, or "taught a lesson"; and how they can have their homes, businesses, and vehicles successfully broken into. Pairing *Criminality* with *Engineering* might be useful for cracking safes and bank vaults, or protecting against such crimes. Pairing it with *Combat: Hand-to-Hand* makes for an effective debt collector. Combine it with **Lying**, and you've got a con artist. Some people with *Criminality* might start a security service, and use this Skill to keep their clients safe from enemies. Others might be criminals, and use this Skill to achieve their nefarious goals.

Possible Uses: *Protecting against criminals; earning money without a job (a real one, anyway); working for gangsters; disposing of bodies; starting a criminal gang; being a police officer or investigator; being a private eye; bodyguarding; spotting criminals in a crowd; identifying the work of criminals.*

Engineering

(INT or WIS, *pick one*)

In this game, *Engineering* covers a very wide spectrum of hands-on mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and electronic knowledge and capabilities. Space vessels, colony stations, and survival shelters on hostile worlds all require people with the *Engineering* Skill. It's safe to say that life in space would be impossible without it. People with this Skill can build things, assemble and disassemble machinery and structures, look for signs of tampering or sabotage (or, conversely, *cause* sabotage), and make repairs on machinery and electronic devices.

Hit Point damage to a vessel, from accidents, space combat, or whatever, is restored through the successful application of Engineering. (See the chapter on **Space Combat**).

As usual, under most non-stressful, circumstances, using *Engineering* does not require a die roll to do ordinary or mundane things. In a crisis, rolls are needed, and they are needed when the character attempts to perform an *Engineering* task above their level (see table below).

Each Skill level reflects an increase in knowledge and experience. The table below is a guide to the sorts of capabilities that a character with *Engineering* can perform at which level, without penalty. Any difference between a character's Skill level, and the task they are attempting, represents either a bonus or a penalty to their Skill check.

Example: *Indio has **Engineering 1**, for a Skill score of **12**. She attempts to repair the artificial gravity system (AG) of her spaceboat. Repair of AG is a level **4** Capability, which gives her a **-3** on her score for the purposes of this Skill check, bringing it down to **9**. She rolls **1d20**, and gets an **11**; normally a success, the **-3** makes this a failure. The job is too hard for her right now.*

Skill level	Capabilities
1	**General Repair/Maintenance** of basic space vessel systems, including mechanical, electrical, electronic, plumbing (including liquid mass stabilizers), HVAC and associated life support, filtration, refueling, kit or unit assembly/installation tasks.
2	**Sensor and Communications Repair/Maintenance**, including ship defense controls (Gunnery suites), radar systems, lidar, spectral analyzers, IR sensors, radio broadcast/reception, etc. *Includes fine repair or even construction/design work for all Skill level 1 Capabilities.*
3	**Main Drive Repair/Maintenance** of rocket, reaction mass, jet, and ramjet/scramjet engines (large and small), repair/maintenance of hull/superstructure. *Includes fine repair or even construction/design work for all Skill level 1-2 Capabilities.*
4	**Artificial Gravity/Inertial Compensator Repair/Maintenance**, as well as hands-on repair/maintenance of weapon systems. *Includes fine repair or even construction/design work for all Skill level 1-3 Capabilities.*
5	**Starjump Repair/Maintenance**. *Includes fine repair or even construction/design work for all Skill level 1-4 Capabilities.*
6	**Space Vessel Design**. Designing entire space vessels from scratch. *Includes fine repair or even construction/design work for all Skill level 1-5 Capabilities.*

NOTE: This Skill has a focus on space vessels, but the knowledge is

applicable to any similar systems, whether upon space stations, asteroids, planets, or whatever.

NOTE: Use of this Skill for anything that calls for a die roll generally requires the use of specialized tools, or at least a portable *Tool Kit*. (See the chapter on **Equipment**.) Attempting to use *Engineering* without tools, especially when trying to build, repair, or test something, means a **-4** Skill check penalty, on top of any other modifiers in place. Using a *Tool Kit* that has run out of supplies means a **-2** Skill check penalty.

Possible Uses: *Repairs and maintenance of space vessel and station vital systems; repair of weapons and other devices; bypassing security systems; picking electronic and mechanical locks; installation/removal of electrical and plumbing systems.*

Exosuit

(STR)

Using any one of a wide variety of garments that create an artificial environment for the wearer. This includes pressuresuits, powered armor, extreme thermal protective (ETP) suits, fully-contained chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) hazmat suits, and more.

Possible Uses: *EVAs in space; exploration on the surface of hostile planets; teaching proper pressuresuit usage; entering biohazard zones; entering large fires; maintenance of exosuits; selling/dealing in exosuits; putting on an exosuit quickly in a crisis.*

Explosives

(INT, WIS, or DEX, *pick one*)

(Prereqs: *Engineering* and *Science*)

Safely building, handling, and setting explosive devices of various kinds; building detonators for them; and improvising explosives from common componants.

> **NOTE**: With the exception of Mini-Grenades, most explosives are illegal in civilian hands. Possible exceptions include mining and demolition operations, civilian contractors to law enforcement and military organizations, and commercial chemical/munition suppliers.

> **NOTE**: This Skill does not expressly include throwing these types of weapons with proficiency.

Possible Uses: *Setting bombs; defusing bombs; finding hidden bombs; building or removing IEDs; demolitions; setting booby-traps; teaching this Skill to others.*

Gunnery

(INT, WIS or DEX *pick one*)

(Prereqs: *Computers* and *Engineering*)

Operating a modern civilian-class gunnery suite, which integrates sensors, computer operations, and a vessel's installed armaments into a single software interface, or dedicated equipment stack. Includes troubleshooting and maintenance capabilities.

Possible Uses: *Ship defense; piracy; mercenary work; assessing the* **Gunnery** *Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Interrogation

(WIS)

Questioning people, and getting truthful or revealing answers. This includes interviewing witnesses, conducting job interviews, or giving criminal suspects the third degree. This can be combined with *Criminality*, *Lying* or pretty-much any other Skill, depending upon the situation, which can sometimes provide bonuses (GM's determination).

Possible Uses: *Applying or hiring for a job; obtaining information from people; being a journalist; detecting evasiveness or lies; conducting interviews; analyzing information obtained through this Skill; teaching this Skill.*

Lying

(CHA or WIS, *pick one*)

Telling convincing untruths. Formal teaching may come from a variety of sources,

including acting classes; law enforcement, military, or intelligence training (especially regarding interrogation and/or espionage); criminal tutelage (especially from organized crime operations); and more. Informal training might be obtained through simple grifting, street hustling, storytelling, or even just a natural predisposition (compulsive liar).

Lying is distinct from *Social Engineering*, in that, reality is not much of a barrier to the liar. Rather than schmoozing the doorman with the names of acquaintances, so as to gain access to a private party (the way someone with *Social Engineering* could approach things), a character using the *Lying* Skill might just say that they *are* one of those people. If it works, great! If they get caught later on, well, maybe they just need another line of B.S.

Lying is generally more adaptable than *Social Engineering*, but it's usually just a temporary solution. And only the GM knows how NPCs will react once the truth comes out.

Possible Uses: *Talking your way out of trouble; talking your way* into* trouble; conning a mark; making up believable excuses; salesmanship; negotiations; detecting evasiveness or lies; intimidation.*

Medico

(INT or WIS, *pick one*)

As a term, "medico" covers the vast breadth of medical science in this future time. It's also used to refer to any practitioner of medicine, regardless of the exact branch, since there are a dizzying number of degrees, titles, and certifications available throughout space. In Stardrifter, especially regarding player characters, the focus of the *Medico* Skill is on emergency first aid.

A character with this Skill may attempt to heal **HP** or **Stamina** damage in themselves or another person. Upon a successful Skill check, the character restores **1d4** to HP, and then to Stamina, in that order: once HP is fully restored, any healing goes to Stamina.

If performed on someone who is at **0** HP or below, it might be possible to save them (bring them to at least **1** HP) with a successful *Medico* Skill check. They will no longer lose HP, and will, in fact, begin healing HP at the normal rate of **1** point per **24 hours** of rest.

If the character with *Medico* fails in their attempt to bring the victim up to at least **1** HP, the medico must stay by the victim's side continually in order to maintain the fragile state of their health. Should they leave this person's side without someone else taking over who also has the *Medico* Skill (or perhaps, someone who doesn't, who nonetheless makes a successful WIS Attribute check with the usual penalties), the victim in this scenario will begin losing HP again immediately. This is known as *soft stabilization*.

The attending medico may attempt another *Medico* Skill check on this person the next day (**24 hours**), in order to properly heal or stabilize them. Healing the patient up to **1** HP means they can now be safely left to heal the rest of the way on their own, or they can be healed up with further use of this Skill, as per normal.

If the medico makes a successful Skill check, but does not bring them up to **1** HP, the patient is still stabilized in such a way that they may be safely left on their own for up to **3** hours per *Medico* Skill level. This is known as *hard stabilization*. After this time, if the medico hasn't returned, the patient will begin to lose HP again at the same rate as before. If someone who is hard stabilized is checked on periodically by a character with *Medico*, however, no further dice rolls are required, and the character will heal naturally at **1** HP per day. The medico can also try to use their Skill again the next day, in order to speed up the process.

If one character fails a *Medico* Skill check, another with *Medico* may make an attempt. Healing from more than one character with this Skill cannot be "stacked", that is to say, if one character heals someone for a certain number of points, they can't then turn that person over to someone else to try and get more healing, unless **24** hours have passed. (Also, see the chapter on **Damage and Healing**.)

> **NOTE**: *Medico* checks are considered to be automatically successful if the Skill is used in a relatively non-stressful situation (such as in a safe, quiet room, away from the firefight; and certainly *not* when the victim is at or below **0** HP, and dying). Attempting to use *Medico*, or any Skill, while the pressure is on, *always* requires a Skill check.

> **NOTE**: A *Medico Kit* is usually used in conjunction with this Skill, as it can increase the character's effective level regarding Skill checks, along with increasing the number of healing points restored. (See **Equipment**.)

Possible Uses: *Emergency first aid; identifying and neutralizing drugs or poisons; concocting drugs or poisons (usually in conjunction with* **Science***); diagnosing injuries and common illnesses; inflicting torture; reading medical charts; understanding medical information of a technical nature.*

Performance

(CHA)

Using a performing art of some sort. This Skill covers dancing, singing, or acting (including stand-up comedy or storytelling). For simplicity's sake, the character may roll against this one Skill to attempt any or all performing arts. This Skill might be able to substitute for *Lying* and/or *Social Engineering*, in certain situations (GM's option).

Possible Uses: *Putting on a show; creating a distraction; talking your way out of*

trouble; talking your way into trouble; starting or joining a performing group; assessing the **Performance** *Skill of others; detecting lies; teaching this Skill to others.*

Piloting: Air

(DEX or WIS, *pick one*)

Operating heavier-than-air vehicles for in-atmosphere flight. (Includes surface-to-orbit shuttles.)

> **NOTE**: Streamlined space vessels, either ships or boats, require someone with the *Piloting: Space* Skill to operate them in outer space. Someone is also needed who has *Piloting: Air*, in order to fly or land the vessel upon any world with a substantial atmosphere.

Possible Uses: *Flying vessels such as fixed wing aircraft, tubofan aircars, rotary aircraft, etc.; basic maintenance of aircraft; assessing the* **Piloting: Air** *Skill of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Piloting: Ground

(DEX or WIS, *pick one*)

Operating cars, trucks, buses, rollers, bicycles, motorcycles, and small trams.

Possible Uses: *Driving on developed roads; driving upon dirt roads, or over no road; high-speed chases; fast getaways; basic maintenance on ground vehicles; assessing the* **Piloting: Ground** *Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Piloting: Space

(DEX or WIS, *pick one*)

Operating spaceboats and starships of most designs. Larger space vessels require a higher level of this Skill. (See the chapter on *Space Vessels*.)

Possible Uses: *Hiring on as a ship's pilot; outrunning pirates; dodging missiles; assessing the **Piloting: Space** Skills of others; teaching this Skill to others.*

Piloting: Water

(DEX or WIS, *pick one*)

Operating powered vehicles for water travel, such as boats and hovercraft. (Includes small submersibles.)

Possible Uses: *Moving people or cargo across a body of water (or liquid methane, lava, mercury, etc., with the right kind of high-tech boat); teaching this Skill to others.*
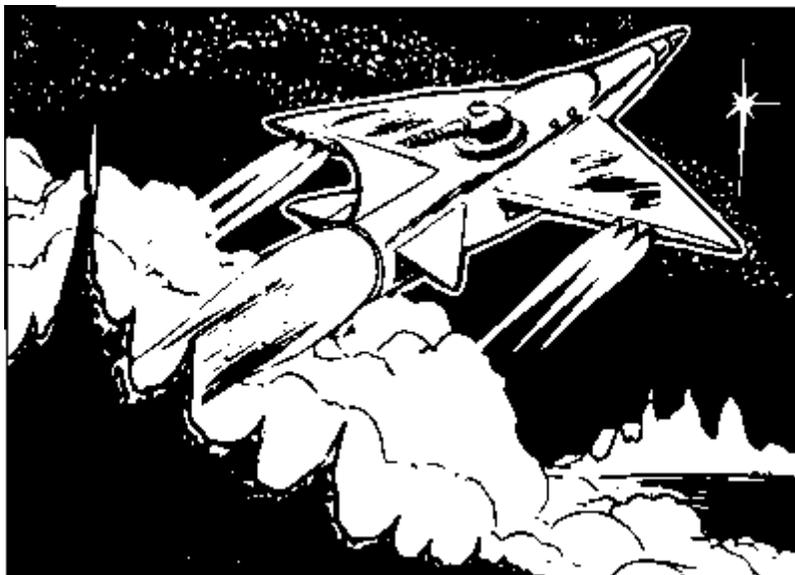
Science

(INT)

There are a dizzying number of scientific branches in this future time. The *Science* Skill represents generalist training in the scientific method, and in broad branches of science and research, including (but not limited to) biology, genetics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, and materials science. Characters with this Skill have both theoretical and practical training; they can assist scientists, and even conduct simple experiments of their own.

> **NOTE**: Conducting field tests or research generally requires a **Science Kit** (see the chapter on *Equipment*). An actual science lab will have everything that a **Science Kit** has, and much more.

Possible Uses: *Understanding/using scientific equipment; conducting experiments; creating chemicals/machinery/applications; understanding scientific reports; creating scientific reports based on collected data; collecting scientific data; interfering with the scientific or engineering efforts of others.*

Social Engineering

(CHA)

It's not what you know, it's who you know, and how you play them. While there might be a bit of crossover here with *Lying* or *Performance*, this is considered to be a distinct Skill all its own. Finessing a situation isn't the same as fabricating the truth or assuming a different persona. A business person may use *Social Engineering* to make a sale; they can call upon or refer to friends and acquaintances in the industry for leads; they can introduce people to each other; and they can find out what their clients like and then try to provide it.

Possible Uses: *Learning who you need to talk to, then finding a way to talk to them; salesmanship; arbitration; interrogation; negotiation; diplomacy; management/command; making friends; teaching; talking your way past a human obstacle like a doorman.*

Stealthiness

(DEX)

Moving quietly and unseen, or just hiding in plain sight. This includes using the cover of darkness to remain hidden, watching someone on a busy street, or hunting out in the wild.

> **NOTE**: This cannot be performed while the character is in an exosuit or powered armor.

Possible Uses: *Stalking/shadowing someone; avoiding a stalker; hiding in shadows; hiding in plain sight; general surveillance; burglary/theft; assassination; combat; spying; sneaking around.*

Stewarding

(DEX or WIS, *pick one*)

This provides the character with a generalized knowledge of the many service-related techniques and equipment associated with caring for waking passengers upon space vessels. It can sometimes be directly applied to other types of work, such as a cleaning business, food service, sanitation, or more.

Possible Uses: *Hiring on as a steward for a space vessel; waitstaff in a restaurant;*

hotel management; cleaning services; butler or maid services; housekeeping; basic food service.

Survival: Hostile Environment

(INT or STR, *pick one*)

(Prereq: *Exosuit* and *Survival: Nature*)

Being able to survive in extreme environmental conditions. This includes planetary or lunar surfaces with very high or low surface temperatures and/or atmospheric pressures, poisonous or caustic atmospheres, unstable ground, excessive vulcanism, high radiation, meteoric bombardment, continual storms, etc.

Possible Uses: *Working on terraforming projects; rescuing people on dangerous worlds; working under extreme conditions on Terra or other "tamed" worlds; surviving in extreme work environments, such as super-cold freezers, reactor cores, etc.*
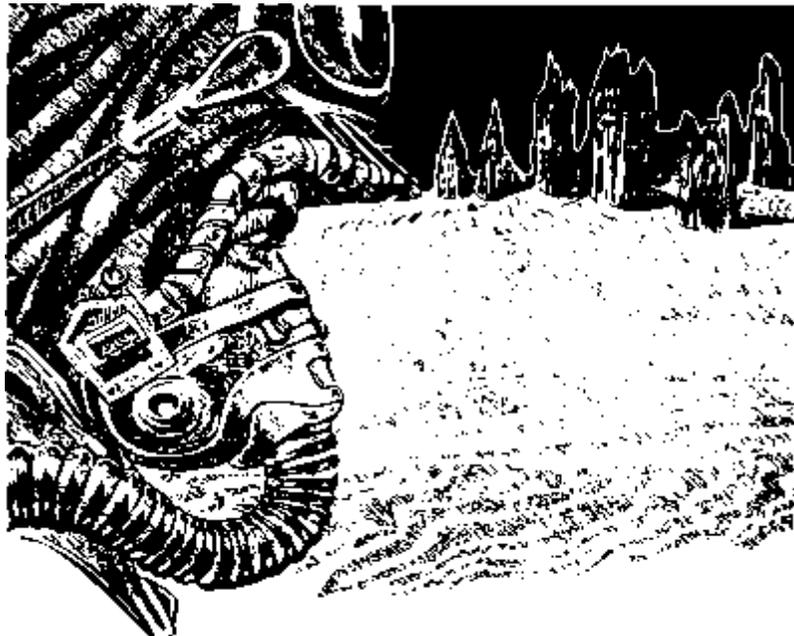
Survival: Nature

(INT or STR, *pick one*)

Surviving, even thriving, in the great outdoors, upon Terran-style planetary surfaces. This includes foraging for food, finding shelter, locating potable water, tracking prey; basic hunting and fishing (no big game); dealing with weather extremes.

Possible Uses: *Homesteading; finding lost hikers; tracking people through natural environments; avoiding being tracked by others, military-style deployment or training in the field.*

Survival: Urban

(INT or CHA, *pick one*)

Surviving homelessness in planetary-based cities and upon space stations, as well as ship-hopping upon large space vessels (space hobos). This includes locating shelter, food, water, medicine, and small amounts of money.

Possible Uses: *Living on the cheap; hiding from people; knowing where important buildings or facilities are located in a city-like environment, panhandling; avoiding police; avoiding gangs or criminals.*

Survival: Vacuum

(INT)
(Prereq: *Exosuit*)

Surviving, or even thriving in vacuum conditions for extended periods of time. This

Skill covers equipment such as chemical extractors for obtaining oxygen and hydrogen (for air and water) from the rocks and other natural materials found on asteroids and planets in vacuum. How to use, maintain, and improvise CO_2 scrubbers. How to use and improvise biowaste solutions. Includes the ability to maintain and repair pressuresuits and emergency vac shelters.

Possible Uses: *Homesteading on asteroids; rescuing people who are in vacuum; improvising an emergency pressuresuit or vacuum shelter (perhaps in conjunction with* **Engineering***); working in open space.*

Money

The *Q*

The standard monetary unit for much of the settled galaxy is an electronic currency call the **Credit Unit of Exchange**, or C.U.E., universally shortened to just *Q*.

Q exist as data in a computer network, or can be transferred to specialized data storage units called wallets. Despite the name, wallets may take nearly any form, from a data stick, to something installed under the skin in a cybernetic implant. Some wallets are encrypted, only allowing their owner to make use of them, while others are more universal, allowing use by anyone who possesses them.

All characters start the game with 2500*Q*

With this money, they may buy equipment, weapons, and armor. They probably won't want to spend it all before the first game, since there are other expenses to be met here and there, including *Cost of Living*.

Cost of Living

In reality, the **Cost of Living** (CoL), from one star system to another, or even within the same system, tends to vary widely. This does not include any special purchases, such as weapons or other equipment; this is only a reflection of how much it costs to find basic lodgings and food for one **24** hour day in this place.

Going to a nice restaurant, paying application fees, bribing people, large or extravagant transportation expenses, or other sundry costs of the adventuring life, are *not* covered by the CoL charge. Decent meals, lodging, and local transportation in and around the area *are* covered.

As an aspect of practical game-related book keeping, and depending upon the GM, characters could either expend this money at the start of the day (so no one forgets to do so), or at the end of the day, after these expenses will have been made.

To simplify things in **Stardrifter**, the CoL is broken down into just three categories: **Low**, **Medium**, and **High**, based upon the relative quality of a place, or the quality-of-life expected there. The socioeconomic situation of most settlements, whether space stations or planets, will generally reflect this CoL, which in turn, reflects the economic opportunities available. By and large, *most* places in the galaxy with any sort of economy fall into the Medium category, at least, as far as adventuring PCs are concerned. A few places have exorbitant CoLs, while frontier worlds or abandoned stations won't have any at all (but no available services, either).

CoL Per Day, By Quality of Location

- 1*Q*: **Low**
- 5*Q*: **Medium**
- 10*Q*: **High**

Depending upon the place, vagrancy might or might not be illegal. Either way, it is

possible for someone with the *Survival: Urban* Skill to ignore the CoL, provided the place is sufficiently industrialized. They may do this without any need for a Skill check, unless or until the GM determines that a stressful situation has arisen (being harried by police or criminals, etc.). Terraformed planets with rural or wild locations can allow those with *Survival: Nature* to do the same.

Docking Fees

If the characters own, or are responsible for, a space vessel docked at a station, the fees associated with dock rentals, maintenance costs, atmo recharges, and minor repairs are equal to *the above-listed fees in* **Q**, *plus the vessel's Size times 100*, per 24 hour day. (See the chapter on **Space Vessels** for information on vessel sizes.)

Number of *Q* for CoL + Size x 100

This money is in addition to the CoL for each individual, but does not include the cost of replacing any missiles fired, Medico supplies, or food stores. It *does* include potable water, and biowaste removal.

Missiles are sold in pre-packed cylinders, called, appropriately enough, **Missile Packs**. Missile Packs cost **1d6x1000** in *Q* to replace (prices do fluctuate), and the dealer cannot just replace individual missiles fired, but rather, the entire Missile Pack must be replaced as a single unit.

Space vessels that are docked do not earn money, they *cost* money, and it really adds up fast.

> **Example**: *An average Merchanter of Size 2, docked at a Medium quality space station, would cost its owner(s) 700***Q** *per day in docking fees. (5***Q***+2x100). Ouch!*

Equipment

As outlined in the **Money** section, characters start the game with a certain number of *Q*, with which they may purchase equipment.

Equipment categories are broken down into *Armor*, *Weapons*, and *Gear*. Naturally enough, certain Skills are best performed in conjunction with certain types of equipment.

> **NOTE**: The Weapons listed below, and some Armor types, refer to something called a *Weapon DC*, with a rating expressed in numbers (*Weapon DC: 1*, *Weapon DC: 2*, etc.) This refers to the *Weapon Damage Class*, which is described in the chapter on **Combat**. For now, just make a note of this on your character sheet, for any item you purchase.

Armor

Ballistic Shield

PR 2, SR 30

Cost: 75*Q*

*Opponents have **-1** penalty on their Combat Skill score as a situational modifier.*

Designed for use with a wide range of firearms, these shields have viewports, slots, and notches so the wielder can fire both pistols and rifles while crouching behind them. Not heavy, but large and awkward. **-2** on DEX Attribute checks while being used (*not* Skill checks). A Ballistic Shield can be used with other Armor types, in which case its PR 2 is added to that other Armor's PR score. Attackers have a **-1** SitMod penalty to

their Combat Skill score when attacking anyone using a Ballistic Shield, since it acts as partial cover. User is immune to *Weapon DC 2* attacks that come from the front.

Extensible Ballistic Shield

PR 2, SR 20

Cost: 300*Q*

*Opponents have **-1** penalty on their Combat Skill score as a situational modifier.*

Functioning in Combat like the *Ballistic Shield* above, this piece of armor straps to the forearm, and snaps open or closed when desired. Because of this, it incurs no DEX penalty for awkwardness. When opened, it's not quite as large as a solid *Ballistic Shield*, nor is it as durable, so it has a smaller SR. It is also much more expensive. This item can be used with other Armor types, in which case, its PR 2 is added to that other Armor's PR score. Attackers have a **-1** SitMod penalty to their Combat Skill score when attacking anyone using an *Extensible Ballistic Shield*, since it acts as partial cover. User is immune to *Weapon DC 1* attacks that come from the front.

Chest Plate

PR 3, SR 30

Cost: 600*Q*

+2 *bonus on* **SAVE: Physical** *checks.*

This is a hard vest, made of a tough ballistic material. It covers the chest and back.

Flak Vest

PR 2, SR 20

Cost: 400*Q*

A *Flak Vest* is relatively thin, and can be worn under street clothes or other Armor types. If worn under other Armor, its PR 2 is added to that of the other Armor.

Flex Vest

PR 2, SR 25

Cost: 500*Q*

+1 *bonus on* **SAVE: Physical** *checks.*

This is a fairly substantial vest made of a ballistic oobleck; it is soft and flexible to slow contact, but becomes hard and ridged when struck or impacted quickly. It is too bulky to be worn under street clothes without drawing attention.

Hardsuit

PR 4, SR 100

Cost: 800*Q*

+3 *bonus on* **SAVE: Physical** *checks. Wearer is immune to all stun effects.*

This is full-body ballistic armor, including helmet and boots. Hardsuits have integrated radio communications, equal to a *Radio Headset*. Wearer is immune to Weapon DC 1 attacks.

NOTE: A Hardsuit does not provide pressuresuit benefits, though a *Simple Vacsuit* can fit over it.

Powered Armor

PR 8, SR 200

Cost: 1500*Q*

Prereq: *Exosuit*

+4 *bonus on* **SAVE: Physical** *checks,* **+2** *bonus on* **SAVE: Mental** *checks,* **+2** *to wearer's STR checks while worn; wearer is immune to all stun effects, wearer is immune to Weapon DC 2 or less.*

This is a full-body exoskeleton, with ballistic plates head-to-toe, and augmentation to the wearer's STR. *Powered Armor* can act as a fully-functional pressuresuit, with environmental systems, decent protection from cosmic and stellar radiation, and air for up to **24 hours**. It is effective against physical, biological, radiological, and directed energy attacks. It has integrated media communications, equal to a *Radio Headset*, but it also includes video, and cameras for external audio/video feeds.

Making active use of *Powered Armor*, or even just taking a step in it without falling down, requires the *Exosuit* Skill, and Skill checks may be required when attempting to do something difficult in this armor while you are also in stressful circumstances (such as being attacked).

Weapons

All Weapons on this short list are of the Civilian Class, and are legal in most (though not all) parts of space. (See the chapter on **Combat**, for details on how some of these are used.)

Club (large)

Damage: **1d6+2**

Weapon DC: **2**

Cost: 15*Q*

*Doing **5** or more points of damage in one attack requires the target to roll a **SAVE: Physical** or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds.*

This is a large hard plastic stick that is the size of a bat, or a big riot baton. It cannot be carried on a belt, but it can be strapped to the back, or slung from one shoulder.

Club (small)

Damage: **1d4+2**

Weapon DC: **1**

Cost: 10*Q*

*Doing **6** points (full damage) in one attack requires the target to roll a **SAVE: Physical** or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds.*

This is a short, heavy, hard plastic club, like a police baton. Can be worn comfortably on a belt, or hidden up a sleeve.

Club (stun baton)

Damage: **1d4+2 plus Stun**

Weapon DC: **1**

Cost: 300*Q*

*Doing **6** points (full damage) in one attack, requires the target to roll a **SAVE: Physical** or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds. Additionally, this weapon can dispense an electrical surge upon **any** successful hit or touch, regardless of the amount of damage inflicted (even if none at all), which also requires the target to roll a **SAVE: Physical** or be stunned for **1d4** rounds. (See the entry on **Stun** for details, in the chapter on **Combat**).*

This weapon is the size and shape of a *Club (small)*. It holds three charges, after which it acts as a normal *Club (small)* in combat. The user can choose to make a stun attack or not (there's a button on the side), and if the attack is not successful, the charge is not expended. Also, the attacker does not need to actually do bludgeon damage with this weapon in order to dispense the electric jolt; a mere touch will do it. This weapon can be recharged from a standard outlet at a rate of **1** charge per minute.

NOTE: The stun effects of this weapon are cumulative. Should the attacker roll max damage to hit, while also expending a charge, *and* the defender fails both of their *SAVE: Physical* rolls (the second of which will be at **1/2** normal, due to the *first* Stunning), the defender immediately drops unconscious for **1 hour**.

NOTE: This item is a favorite among police and riot squads, as well as criminal gangs. As such, it is sometimes illegal for ordinary citizens to carry one. Local laws vary.

Hard Object (small)

Damage: **1d4+1**

Weapon DC: **1**

Cost: n/a

*Doing **5** points (full damage) in one attack requires the target to roll a* **SAVE: Physical** *or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds.*

This refers to any improvised weapon one might find on hand during combat, such as a bottle, a chair, a fire extinguisher, a wrench, a rock, etc. Some of these can be thrown, some not. An item like a glass bottle used in a fight will get smashed; at the GM's option, it leaves behind a broken bottle that does the same amount of damage as before, but otherwise acts like a *Knife*. Be creative: improvised weapons require improvised rules.

Hard Object (large)

*(See the entry for **Combat: Thrown Object** in the Chapter on **Skills**; or, if the object in question is very large, see the section on **Impact Damage**, in the chapter on **Damage and Healing**.)*

Knife

Damage: **1d4+2**

Weapon DC: **2**

Cost: 100*Q*

*Doing **4** or more points of **HP** (not STAM) damage in one attack requires the target to roll a **SAVE: Physical** or lose **1 HP** per round thereafter from blood loss, until they receive Medico treatment.*

This is either a folding or non-folding knife with a moderate blade length and sharp edge.

Mini-Grenade

Damage: **2d4+2**

Weapon DC: **3**

Cost: 200*Q*

*Single use (obviously). In addition to any damage, targets must roll a successful **SAVE: Physical** or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds. Roll damage and **SAVE: Physical** checks*

separately for all targets in the AoE.

*Can be thrown out to a range of 30 meters; roll STR Attribute check to hit within the AoE (**4** meter radius). Alternatively, the attacker may use the **Athleticism** or **Combat: Thrown Object** Skills if available.*

This is a miniature stick-shaped explosive device, something like a blasting cap, designed for self-defense against street gangs and small mobs. It can be attached to other objects in order to do minor structural damage, such as blowing open doors, etc.

Pistol (firearm)

Damage: **1d6+2**

Weapon DC: **3**

Ammo Capacity: **20 round magazine**

Cost: (Pistol) 500*Q*; (extra magazine) 10*Q*.

A semi-automatic pistol, firing chemically-propelled kinetic slugs. Practical range is **20 meters**, though longer shots are entirely possible (with modifiers).

After making an attack with this weapon, whether it's successful or not, roll **1d8** for the number of rounds expended.

Pistol (stunner)

Damage: **n/a**

Weapon DC: **1**

Ammo Capacity: **1 charge** (disposable/single use)

Cost: 150*Q*

Upon a successful attack, the target must roll a **SAVE: Physical** *or drop unconscious for* **1 hour**; *otherwise they are Stunned for* **1d4** *rounds.*

This is a small, palm-sized energy weapon strictly designed for self-defense against a single target. Range is **5** meters.

Rifle (firearm)

Damage: **1d8+2**

Weapon DC: **3**

Ammo Capacity: **50 round magazine**

Cost: (Rifle) 1000*Q*; (extra magazine): 20*Q*.

A larger semi-automatic weapon, firing chemically-propelled kinetic slugs. Practical range is **200 meters**, though longer shots are entirely possible (with modifiers).

After making an attack with this weapon, whether it's successful or not, roll **1d12** for the number of rounds expended.

Sword (small)

Damage: **1d6+2**

Weapon DC: **2**

Cost: 300*Q*

Doing **4** *or more points of* **HP** *(not STAM) damage in one attack requires the target to roll a* **SAVE: Physical** *or lose* **1 HP** *per round thereafter from blood loss, until they receive Medico treatment.*

This is an edged weapon the general size of a *machete* or *Roman gladius*. It can be concealed under a trench coat or other long garment, but is otherwise rather obvious when carried around. Though legal in most places for civilians to own and use in certain contexts (such as doing yard work), a *Sword (small)* is often illegal in others (such as walking boldly down a city street). The GM will determine when or if this weapon draws attention, and what follows thereafter.

Gear

Comm

Cost: 1000*Q*

This is an advanced, portable communication and computing device. It can take almost any form, from having an implantable cybernetic interface with cornea displays in the eyes, to something pocket-sized and concealable. The exact form is the player's choice, but what it looks like must be noted upon the **Character Sheet**. A comm allows direct device-to-device communication, link-ups with information nets, data storage, respectable computational functionality, and hacking/cracking capabilities. A

character with the *Computers* Skill, who also owns a Comm unit, always has a powerful computer handy.

A *Comm* can be used like a *Radio Earbud/Headset* (listed below), but is capable of much more.
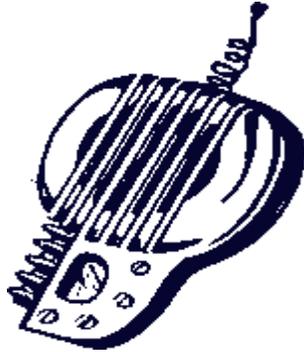
Medico Kit

Cost: 200*Q*

Provides a **+2** for all *Medico* Skill checks, and an additional **+1** point of healing (STAM or HP) for each *Medico* Skill level of the user. Additionally, even if a character using a Medico Kit fails in their attempt to heal someone who is at or below **0 HP**, the patient is considered to be *stabilized*. (See *Medico* under the chapter on Skills).

A *Medico Kit* has room for medicines and wound patches for up to *10 uses* (or *attempted* uses: failed die rolls still count), at which time it needs to be replaced.

Pressuresuit

Cost: 1000*Q*

Provides air and Terran-normal pressurization for up to **24 hours**, as well as fine protection from solar and cosmic radiation, and full protection against cold and heat, ranging from **90 to 2000 degrees** Kelvin (approx. -180C/-300F to 1730C/3140F).

A *Pressuresuit* has integrated media communications, including internal and external audio/video feeds (equal to *Radio Earbud/Headset*); waste capture; and various bladders spaced around the suit, adding up to **2 liters** of water, available to the wearer through a tiny sipping line in the helmet.

Though this is not classified as a form of Armor, a *Pressuresuit* nonetheless has PR 1 and SR 10. Once its Structural Rating has run out, it will leak atmo, and the cooling/heating will begin to fail. The wearer can use certain types of Armor with this is item, including a *Shield* (any kind), a *Flak Vest*, or a *Chest Plate*. While simply wearing a *Pressuresuit* does not require the *Exosuit* Skill, properly donning and maintaining one *does*, either in the wearer themself, or in someone close by who can assist. Mistakes here can be fatal.

Radio Earbud/Headset

Cost: 100*Q*

This item provides easily encrypted device-to-device audio and video communication, up to a range of 200 kilometers, with no intervening network required. It can, however, also patch into local data networks at space stations and other settlements, to provide the user with communication anywhere that the network reaches.

Science Field Kit

Cost: 150*Q*

This is a general testing kit small enough to fit in a shoulder bag. It allows for basic scientific inquiries away from the lab. A *Science Field Kit* provides **+2** on all *Science* Skill checks where it is used, involving such things as collecting samples, running simple tests, or taking readings.

A *Science Field Kit* has room for volatile chemicals, delicate sensors, and other contents for up to *10 uses* (or *attempted* uses: failed die rolls still count), at which time it needs to be replaced.

Simple Vacsuit

Cost: 500*Q*

This is an emergency suit thin enough to fold into a small pack. It allows a character to survive complete vacuum conditions for up to eight hours, at which time it will run out of air. It has an external valve, and the air will last indefinitely if an outside supply is

used. Note that this is a thin garment that provides reasonable protection from heat and cold conditions, but not enough to do an extensive spacewalk; nor does it offer much in the way of radiation resistance. They are generally used in case of sudden vac conditions aboard a ship or space station.

Any damage can cause a *Simple Vacsuit* to malfunction. The GM will determine if the character is having issues with it. This item does not require the *Exosuit* Skill in order to be used, but characters that *do* have it may be able to apply that Skill to problems which might arise while wearing one ("*Oops! Looks like I've sprung a leak. Should I be worried?*")

Tool Kit

Cost: (Tool Kit) 500*Q*; (replacement supplies) 50*Q*

A must-have item for anyone with the Engineering Skill. Characters attempting to use Engineering to build, repair, or test something (and sometimes, just to figure out what's wrong), do so at a penalty if they do not have a Tool Kit. In addition to actual tools, these kits have molecular cements (glue), patch tape, conductive creams, and other supplies. The Tool Kit can only be used up 20 times (successfully or not) before running out of supplies, at which time these things must be replaced. (See Engineering, in the chapter on Skills, for more information).
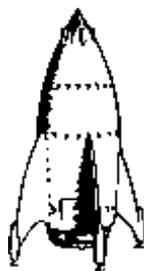
Attribute, Skill, and Save Checks

Most actions are simple, never requiring any sort of check to see if they succeed. When a character attempts to do something difficult, however, especially under stress (being chased, being shot at, defusing a bomb, etc.), an Attribute, Skill, or Save check is required. The GM determines when a situation calls for a check, and which one is required.

All checks in this game are performed with **1d20**. If the result of the roll is equal to or less than the score being tested, the check is successful. The GM may, and often will, determine that SitMods are called for, and if so, they are applied to the character's score, be it an Attribute, Skill, or Save.

Often, a character who fails a check will wish to try again. The GM may rule that this can or can't be done, at their option. They may also rule that trying again is only possible if some aspect of the *situation* or the *character* has changed. Maybe it was raining out last time. Maybe there were too many people around, and it was distracting. Maybe the character has increased their relevant statistic since that first attempt. Or maybe they just got a good night's sleep. The GM will determine if something has changed which could allow for another attempt.

Attribute Checks

These are generally called for when a character attempts to do something requiring a specific Skill that they don't possess. The character must roll **1d20** against that Skill's associated Attribute, usually with penalties. If the number on the die is equal to or less than their Attribute score, the attempt is successful. The GM may apply modifiers to the score being rolled against, and might also have a very different definition of *success* than do the players.

> **Example**: *Jerron is a freelance computer spesh working to uncover some data from a secure network owned by a shady corporation. He can only gain access to the system from an adjunct office, tucked away in the spoke of a large space station. It's unguarded but does have an alarm. Jerron is able to get past this alarm by shutting off power to the small alcove where the office is located. The door, itself, is another problem. He can't break it down: it's too strong, and no one's supposed to even know he was there. He has to pick the lock, but does not have the* **Engineering** *Skill, which includes knowledge of mechanical closures. The GM determines that DEX is the appropriate associated Attribute to roll against. In this case, Jerron's DEX is a* **12***. This isn't a complex lock as such things go, but because he doesn't have any proper training, the GM imposes a* **-1** *penalty on Jerron's Attribute score, making it an* **11** *for this purpose. The player rolls* **1d20***, and gets an* **11***, exactly. That's nearly a failure, but not quite. The GM states that the lock has been picked.*

> **Example**: *After the digital attack has been implemented, Jerron must now leave the way he came, relocking the door so that his presence here remains undetected. Normally, this would just require the same modified DEX roll as before, but a few hours have passed, wherein the heaters in the deck and walls of the alcove have been off (remember, the power is out). It's actually cold here now; condensation has formed, and water has gotten inside the*

*lock. The GM determines that the water has made the locking mechanism more difficult to mess with, and imposes an additional **-2** penalty for this attempt, on top of the **-1** for Jerron not knowing how to properly pick a lock, bringing the new total to **-3**. This time, Jerron's player rolls a **10**, which is comfortably lower than his DEX. Under other circumstances, this would have been a success; because of the modifiers, however, his effective DEX for this check is actually **9**. Jerron fails, and cannot relock the door. He's able to turn the power back on in the alcove, which re-arms the security system, but the door itself is not locked, which could very possibly tip off the company.*

Skill Checks

When a Skill check is called for by the GM, a character must roll **1d20** against their appropriate Skill, and modifiers may apply. If a number equal to or less than their Skill score, plus or minus any modifiers, is rolled on the die, the attempt is successful. If a character does not possess the correct Skill, they must roll versus its associated Attribute, as described above.

> **Example**: *Jerron decides that his lack of knowledge about locks and mechanical systems is a problem. After adventuring for a bit, he gains some CPs and decides to learn a new Skill. He ends up with **Engineering 1**, using INT as the associated Attribute, which gives him a score of **15** in this Skill. Life has a way of being circular sometimes, and Jerron gets re-hired to perform the exact same operation as before, using the exact same remote office. Apparently, failing to relock the door last time was taken to be a mistake on the part of an employee, and not a break-in, since the data breach was never discovered. Nonetheless, the incident made it clear that improvements were required, so the company went ahead and replaced the lock mechanism. Now the door will not even shut unless it's locked; it's on a*

*spring, and will pop right open unless it's pushed closed and specifically locked. The power and alarm systems are as easily defeated as last time, since there has been no upgrade there. If the door still had the same mechanism, the GM might have decided that picking it would just be a straight-up Skill check with no penalties, since Jerron encountered this lock before, and now knows the basics of such simple mechanisms. This new lock is an unexpected snag, and GM once again imposes a **-1** penalty to the job, bringing Jerron's Engineering Skill score down to **14**. That's still better than the modified DEX roll he had to work with before, so Jerron's player rolls **1d20**, and gets a **13**. This would have been a failure last time. This time, it's a success. Let's hope he rolls just as well when it's time to leave!*
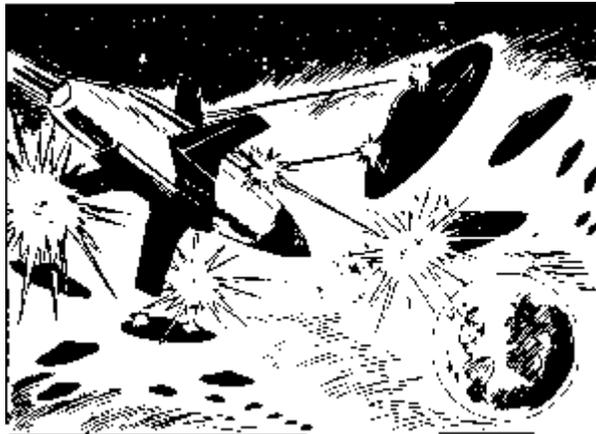
Save Checks

Saves are last ditch statistics to roll against in order to reduce or avoid the effects of bad and otherwise unavoidable situations. These can take the form of almost anything, ranging from lethal explosions, to surviving a spell of vacuum without a suit; from being conned by a grifter, to resisting the effects of brainwashing.

Like other types of Checks, Saves are rolled with **1d20**. Equal to or less than the Save number means success; greater than means failure; and modifiers may well apply.

Save checks come in two varieties, **Mental** and **Physical**, and their scores are obtained as follows:

- **SAVE: Mental**: Add up your character's INT, WIS, CHA, and divide by **3** (rounding up). Put this number under *SAVE: Mental* on your Character Sheet.

- **SAVE: Physical**: Add up your character's STR, CON, DEX, and divide by **3** (rounding up). Put this number under *SAVE: Physical* on your Character Sheet.

Save check scores can be improved over time by increasing a character's Attributes via CPs, which are obtained through adventuring. When an Attribute is permanently increased (or *decreased*; it's a dangerous galaxy), Save check scores must be re-calculated using the above methods.

> **Example**: *Feeling oddly immune to failure due to his new Skill, Jerron takes the same job a third time, figuring it's easy money. Little does he know that the occasional power failure in this alcove has been noticed by station maintenance, who had to file a report with security, since an alarm system is hooked up there. Security is now alerted immediately if there's a power loss. He doesn't get too far this time before two guards show up. They call for the elevators to be locked off to hamper his escape efforts, so Jerron tries using the emergency ladder to go down to a lower level (there are no stairs in the struts of this station). Determining this to be a high-pressure situation, the GM asks if Jerron has the **Athleticism** Skill, which would make dashing down the ladder fairly easy. Jerron does not have that Skill, so the GM then has him roll against DEX, which is an associated Attribute of **Athleticism**, but with a penalty of -2. If he fails, he falls. Again, Jerron's DEX is 12; with the imposed -2, that's a 10. Jerron's player rolls 1d20 and gets a 16. Fail! It's a loooong way down, which makes this an otherwise unavoidable doom, so the GM*

*states that a **SAVE: Physical** check is required. Jerron's score in this is **13**. The GM decides to be more lenient than I would probably be under the circumstances, and does not impose any negative modifiers. The player rolls an **8** on **1d20**, which is a success. The GM determines that Jerron tries to climb down, but slips and falls for a few meters. He takes **1d6+2** points of damage, for a total of **5**, as he bounces down the metal rungs before catching one and stopping his fall. Jerron has **9** STAM, minus the **5**, for a current total of **4**. Yes, he's hurt, but not too badly, and at least he didn't drop to his death. Jerron can now climb down carefully to the next level, or climb back up into the waiting arms of the guards.*

Example*: It turns out the GM is not nicer than I am after all, because the NPCs continue their pursuit with gusto. Jerron's brush with death gave the guards time to corner him, and he is captured. The company who employs these guards is shady, remember, so they tapecuff him, but do not call station police. Instead, they bring him to a back room, where a senior guard begins questioning him. This guard has the **Interrogation** Skill, and tries to force Jerron to reveal what he was after in that small office, and who sent him. The guy is mean, and uses some brutal tactics. Jerron is still hurt from that partial fall, so a rough beating inflicts enough damage to use up the rest of his STAM, and even some HP. Then the GM rolls for the guard, and the guy's Skill check is successful. Jerron could very well crack and reveal all, so his player rolls a SAVE: Mental check, and gets a **7**. Jerron's SAVE: Mental score is **13**. He's able to resist the temptation to give in, though he'll never be able to talk his way out of this one. Or will he? Over the course of his recent adventures, he also spent a few CPs on the Lying Skill!*

Combat

First off, it must be stated emphatically that **combat is dangerous**. You should do everything you can to avoid it.

Character progression in this game is *not* dependent upon combat, in and of itself, but upon achieving goals and good role-playing, among other things. (See the chapter on **Progressing In The Game**).

If you can't avoid combat, then you *really* want to own some **Armor**. Armor is more important than weapons when it comes to surviving a fight in *Stardrifter*, and it will likely be your most important possession. Combat, itself, is described below, but when you're buying **Equipment**, consider spending some of your *Q* on Armor. You won't regret it.

Combat is divided into **rounds**. These rounds are stylized and admittedly unrealistic tools used to organize the chaos of battle. Rounds don't correspond to any standard unit of time, but rather, describe *what* all parties involved in the fight are doing, and *when*, relative to each other. From a practical standpoint, it's rare to need to know how much actual time is passing during the fight. Should that become important (*e.g*, getting past the bad guys to defuse a bomb, etc.) the GM will give a ruling.

For the sake of organization, all characters in a fight perform their actions in sequence, determined by the Initiative order.

Combat: Hand-to-Hand

Initiative

Initiative determines who goes when in the middle of combat or some other crisis. There are two types of Initiative available in the game: **Basic** and **Advanced**. Your GM will tell you which type of Initiative your game is using.

> **NOTE**: Both methods use **1d20** to determine the order of action, but Initiative is *not* a check, in the sense that Critical Success or Failure is counted. For Initiative, the die roll is simply to generate a random number between **1** and **20**.

Regardless of the Initiative method used, characters and NPCs can do the following, in any order, during their turn within the round:

- **Move** up to **7 meters** (or more, if the character has *Athleticism*).

- **Prepare** a weapon or other piece of equipment, or perform some fast action

with it. (*e.g.*, draw a weapon, reload a weapon, call for help on a radio, etc.)

- **Attack** or use another quick Skill or Attribute.

- Talk to each other.

Characters may choose to do one, two, or all three of these things if they wish, or none at all. Save checks happen during the round whenever required, but it is up to the GM to arbitrate what can and can't reasonably happen in the middle of a fight.

Basic Initiative

Each round, someone on the PCs' side rolls **1d20**, and the GM rolls **1d20** for the NPCs. The lowest roll goes first. Re-roll any ties. All characters on the winning side attack, going in any order they or the GM likes, followed by the characters on the other side. Despite this ordering of the combatants, all attacks in a single round are considered to be happening *more-or-less simultaneously*. The dice are rolled simply to aid in playing through the action, and to help understand what happens.

The Basic Initiative system isn't complicated or precise, nor is it especially realistic, but it's *more* realistic than breaking every character's actions down into distinct sequential order. Put simply, it somewhat simulates the frenetic madness of real combat. It also has the advantage of speeding up the fight.

Advanced Initiative

If a more abstract approach is desired, either as a matter of general preference, or because a particular situation requires granularity, the following optional method is available. It uses the *Initiative Differential* (ID) mechanic. If a GM chooses not to use these Advanced Initiative rules, then ID determination can be skipped entirely,

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speeding up the character creation process.

Advanced Initiative functions as follows:

- All players state what actions they intend for their characters.

- All players roll **1d20** and then add in the ID being used (*see below*).

- The ID for most NPCs is **10**. The GM rolls **1d20+10** for each, and fits them into the Initiative order.

The Advanced Initiative system has the advantage of precision, but it lacks realism, and can slow combat down.

Initiative Differential (ID)

As has been touched on in their various chapters, Attribute and Skill scores also come with ID scores.

Finding the ID of a statistic is quite straightforward, and is done the same for each of them:

- Start with the number **20**.
- Subtract the statistic score from that.
- The resulting number (whether positive or negative), is the ID for that statistic.
- Write each of these IDs next to their statistics, in the spaces provided on your Character Sheet.

ID is applied in the game whenever an Initiative roll is required. The player rolls **1d20**, and then *adds* in their ID score (the GM will determine which one is to be used, based on the situation at hand, and the player's intentions). The final number is the character's modified Initiative roll. The final rolls of all the combatants are compared,

and *lowest* number goes first in the round; then the next lowest, then the next, and so on.

The purpose of ID is to allow a character's scores to influence the order of action in a fight or crisis situation where understanding *what* happens *when* is vitally important to the outcome. Characters with high DEX, for instance, could have a reasonable chance of acting more quickly than do others when a combat round begins. Other statistics can be used in a similar way.

> **Example**: *Rouden has a DEX of 13.* **20 - 13 = 7**. *Her DEX ID is 7. A fight breaks out, and the GM calls for Initiative. Rouden's player says she's going to try and to climb a fence to get away before she gets shot. Unfortunately, Rouden does not have the* **Athleticism** *Skill, which is what is needed here. The GM states she must use DEX, instead. Rouden's player then rolls* **1d20**, *and gets a 9.* **9 + 7 = 16**. *The final Initiative rolls of all the participants in the fight are compared, and it looks like Rouden will be going second in the round. Remember, this is merely to determine who goes when; Roudin will have to roll against DEX again when it's her turn to see if she even gets over the fence at all. This is kind-of bad news, since an NPC that is aiming a rifle at her is going first!*

> **Example**: *Rouden has the* **Piloting: Space** *Skill at level 2, with a score of 15. She is sitting in the cockpit of a boat docked at a space station. She's been in there a while, and has all the vessel's systems warmed up, and online. Unfortunately, it's not actually her boat: she and her partners are attempting to steal it, while local authorities are attempting to stop them! So long as it's physically docked here, the boat's controls can be overridden. The police have a handheld device which, if plugged into a dataport that is located within a glass-walled control booth across the dock, can completely disable the vessel. While Rouden is attempting to disengage the boat and fly off, she spies an officer with this device dashing across the floor of the*

control booth. The GM calls for Initiative. What happens next can only be determined by knowing which of these two characters gets to go first. Being an NPC, the officer will just use her DEX ID, which is 10. Rouden, on the other hand, can use her **Piloting: Space** *ID in this circumstance. Again, her* **Piloting: Space 2** *is 15.* **20 - 15 = 5**, *so her* **Piloting: Space** *ID is 5. She rolls for Initiative and gets a 12, then applies her ID, for a final score of 17. The police officer rolls* **1d20** *and also gets gets a 12. She applies her DEX ID, which is 10, for a final score of 22. Even though they both rolled the same number on the die, Rouden's modified 17 beats the officer's modified 22, and the boat pulls away before it can be disabled.*

Regardless of the Initiative method used, characters and NPCs can do the following, in any order, during their turn within the round:

- **Move** up to 7 meters.
- **Prepare** a weapon or other piece of equipment, or perform some fast action with them. (*E.g.*, draw a weapon, reload a weapon, call for help on a radio, etc.)
- **Attack** or use another Skill or Attribute.
- Talk to each other.

Characters may choose to do one, two, or all three of these things if they wish, or none at all. Save Checks happen during the round whenever required, but it is up to the GM to arbitrate what can and can't reasonably happen in the middle of a fight. =======
As has been touched on in their various chapters, Attribute and Skill scores also come with IDs.

Finding the ID of a statistic is quite straightforward, and is done in the same way for each of them:

- Start with the number **20**.

- Subtract the statistic score from that.

- The resulting number (whether positive or negative), is the ID for that statistic.

- Write each of these IDs next to their statistics, in the spaces provided on your **Character Sheet**.

ID is applied in the game whenever an Initiative roll is required. The player rolls **1d20**, and then *adds* in their ID score (the GM will determine which one is to be used, based on the situation at hand, and the player's intentions). The final number is the character's modified Initiative roll. The final rolls of all the combatants are compared, and *lowest* number goes first in the round; then the next lowest, then the next, and so on.

The purpose of ID is to allow a character's scores to influence the order of action in a fight or crisis situation. Classic duels at high noon, for instance, can be easily and quickly performed using ID, as can any contest between two or more characters, where knowing *who goes when* is important. Characters with high DEX, for instance, or ones well-trained in a particular Skill, could have a reasonable chance of acting more quickly than do others when a fight breaks out. Understand, too, that Combat is not the only situation where Initiative might be needed.

> **Example**: *Rouden has a DEX of* **13**. *Her DEX ID is* **7**, *since* **20 - 13 = 7**. *Criminal negotiations in a vacant lot break down, and the GM calls for Initiative. Rouden's player says she's going to try and climb a nearby fence to get away before she gets shot. Unfortunately, Rouden does not have the* **Athleticism** *Skill, which is what is needed here. The GM states she must use DEX, instead. Rouden's player then rolls* **1d20** *for Initiatve, and gets a* **9**. *That's not great, but it's not bad.* **9 + her ID of 7 = 16**. *The final Initiative rolls of all the participants in the fight are compared, and it looks like Rouden will be going second in the round. Remember, this is merely to determine who goes when; Roudin will still have to roll against DEX when it's her turn to act, to see if she gets over the fence at all (and with negative modifiers this*

time, since she is using an Associate Attribute instead of an actual Skill). This is bad news, since the NPC who is going first is aiming a rifle at her!

Example: *Imindi has the* **Piloting: Space** *Skill at level* **2***, with a score of* **15***. She is sitting in the cockpit of a boat docked at a space station. She's been in there a while, and has all the vessel's systems warmed up and online. Unfortunately, it's not actually* **her** *boat: she purloined all the relevant codes! She and her partners are attempting to steal the boat, while local authorities are attempting to stop them. So long as it's physically docked here, the boat's controls can be overridden from outside. The police have a handheld device which will, if plugged into a dataport located within the glass-walled control booth across the dock, completely disable the vessel. While Imindi is attempting to disengage the boat and fly off, she spies an officer with this device dashing across the floor of the control booth. The GM calls for Initiative. The outcome of the next few seconds can only be determined by knowing which of these two characters gets to go first. Being an NPC, the officer will just use her DEX ID, which is* **10***. Imindi, on the other hand, uses her* **Piloting: Space** *ID in this circumstance. Again, her* **Piloting: Space 2** *is* **15***.* **20 - 15 = 5***, so her* **Piloting: Space** *ID is* **5***. She rolls for Initiative and gets a* **12***, then applies her ID, for a final score of* **17***. The police officer rolls* **1d20** *and also gets gets a* **12***. She applies her DEX ID, which is* **10***, for a final score of* **22***. Even though they both rolled the same number on the die, Imindi's modified* **17** *beats the officer's modified* **22***, and the boat pulls away before it can be disabled.*

Fighting

To attack an opponent, the player performs a Skill check by rolling **1d20**, comparing the result to the *Combat* Skill score they're using in the fight. If the character is using a Combat Skill they are *not* trained in, they will be performing an associated Attribute check, likely with penalties. A successful roll indicates a hit.

Damage points are subtracted from the opponent's **STAM** first (*if* they have a STAM score; most NPCs do not), until those points are gone, then they are subtracted from **HP**.

Player characters that are hit roll a *SAVE: Physical* to take **1/2 damage** (minimum **1**

point) for each attack that reduces **HP**, *not* STAM. By and large, only player characters can do this, as most NPCs do not have Stamina scores; but even if they do, they take regular damage, not half, on any HP hits. (It's good to be the hero of the story.) Player characters with the **Xmil** Background roll a SAVE: Physical for **1/4 damage**, instead of **1/2** (again, minimum **1** point).

> **Example**: *Deeja is a player character involved in a firefight against multiple assailants. She has* **HP: 10**, **STAM: 12**, *and a SAVE: Physical of* **13**. *She gets hit twice the first round, taking* **3** *points from one attack, and then* **6** *more from another, for a total of* **9** *points off her STAM. She has* **3** *Stamina left. She fires back and hits one or two of them, but they're still there, and still shooting. Next round, she is hit for* **4** *points. That takes care of all her Stamina, with* **1** *point that comes off her HP. Since the minimum damage per successful attack is* **1**, *her player doesn't roll a SAVE: Physical for* **1/2 damage**. *She shoots back and takes out one of the assailants, but there are still a few more, and they have bullets to spare. Next round she gets hit twice: once for* **3** *points, once for* **4** *points. This is now coming off HP, so Deeja's player gets a SAVE: Physical, to see if* **1/2 damage** *for these attacks is possible. They are rolled for separately. (If Deeja had the Xmil Background, she'd be rolling for* **1/4 damage**, *but she doesn't, so she isn't.) The player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets a* **10**. *That's successful, so the first attack doesn't do* **3** *HP, but only* **1.5** *HP, rounded up to* **2**. *The player then rolls a SAVE: Physical for the second attack, getting a* **6**. *That's also a successful Save, which reduces the* **4** *HP of damage to* **2** *HP. This round, Deeja takes a total of* **4** *HP of damage from the two hits, instead of* **7**. *Including the previous hit, she is now left with* **5** *HP. This fight isn't going well, but it would be even worse if Deeja was an NPC.*

Critical Success and Failure in Combat

This is an optional rule.

While **Critical Success** (CS) and **Critical Failure** (CF) are described in the chapter on *Skills*, there are a few elements that are specific to Combat, described below.

Remember the following:

- Any Skill roll of **1** on **1d20**, regardless of any modifiers, is considered a Critical Success.
- Any Skill roll of **20** on **1d20**, regardless of any modifiers, is considered a Critical Failure.
- The Game Master may decree that any particular attempt to use a Skill is either automatically possible or automatically impossible, based upon the circumstances.

To determine Criticals, when a Weapon Skill Check is called for, just like any other Skill Check, the player adds up their character's Skill Level (whichever Skill they're using; in the case of a substitute Attribute, their Level is zero), and any SitMods the GM assigns. The sum of the Level and SitMods is then added to **1** to determine the chance of CS, and to **20** to determine the chance of CF. Again, see the chapter on **Skills** for more information on this.

In **Combat**, any CS while attacking someone or some thing results in damage that is equal to double the damage rolled, or the maximum damage of the weapon involved, *whichever is greater*. Any CF indicates the character not only failed, but failed badly, becoming indisposed in the middle of the fight. Maybe their weapon jammed, maybe they dropped it, maybe they slipped on the deck when trying to kick someone and went to their knees. It can be described however the player or GM likes, but the end result is that the player is required to roll **1d4**, to determine the number of Combat rounds their character will be indisposed. During this time, the character cannot

attack, but they may do any other action allowed during a combat round. They can move up to 7 meters; prepare another weapon or piece of equipment; talk; or do some other small action that the GM allows.

Example: *Gala is involved in a gunfight in a darkened room with two goons. She has* **Combat: Pistol** *at Skill Level* **1** *and a Skill score of* **11** *(1/11). One of the goons has unwisely stepped out into the open, and she gets a clear shot. The GM decrees that there is a flashing neon light in the window behind this goon, highlighting him nicely. This gains Gala a SitMod of* **+1**. *Gala's Skill Level of* **1** *added with the* **+1** *SitMod, for a total of* **2**. *That* **2** *is added to* **1** *for determining CS, getting a* **3**, *and to* **20** *for determining CF, getting a* **22**. *Gala's attack will be a Critical Success on a roll of* **1**, **2**, *or* **3**, *and a Critical Failure only on a natural* **20**. *Her player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets a* **3**! *Gala is using a pistol, which does* **1d6+2** *for damage, but the CS means she gets double or max. Her player rolls* **1d6**, *and gets a* 1, *plus* **2** *results in* **3**. *Doubled, that's only* **6** *points, while maximum damage for a Pistol is* **8**. *Because of the CS, Gala inflicts max damage on the goon, who drops in his tracks.*

Example: *The remaining goon fires back. He can see Gala, but she is mostly in shadow; the GM decides that he gets no modifier on his attack. He has* **Combat: Pistol 2/12**. *He can get a CS on a* **1**, **2**, *or* **3**, *and a CF on a natural* **20**. *Unfortunately, he does the unlikely, and actually rolls a natural* **20**! *This goon is an NPC, so the GM rolls* **1d4** *to determine how long the guy will be unable to fire back. He rolls a* **3**, *deciding the guy has dropped his pistol, and has to scramble in the dark for three rounds in order to find it again. Gala heard the weapon clatter to the floor, and steps forward to cover the guy, warning him not to move or she'll kill him. At this point, the GM can decide that the goon listens, or that he jumps up and tries to punch Gala, or something else entirely.*

Combat Damage

All successful attacks do one of the following to the opponant:

- Physical injury in the form of damage points to Armor, STAM, and/or HP. This may result in death.

- Stun (*see below*).

- Unconsciousness.

Physical injury is the most common result of an attack, and the amount of damage points inflicted is dependent upon the exact weapon being used, and the dice roll involved.

After Armor protection (if any) is determined, all physical damage comes off a character's STAM until it is gone (if they have a Stamina score at all), and then it starts coming off their HP. (*See the chapter on* **Damage and Healing**.)

Stun

Certain types of combat and weaponry can cause a Stun effect, either in addition to, or rather than, a loss of STAM or HP. Stunned characters are not helpless, but they are faced with several immediate, and rather severe, disadvantages:

- Movement, as well as Attribute, Skill, and Save checks, are all at **1/2** normal for that character, except for Prime Skills. (*See NOTE, below*).

- If using **Basic Initiative**, any side that has even *one* Stunned character on it automatically loses Initiative. If both sides have Stunned characters, Initiative is rolled as usual.

- If using **Advance Initiative**, any Stunned characters go last in the Initiative order.

- Any Stunned character affected by a second Stun before the first one wears off immediately falls unconscious for one hour, no Save check allowed.

- Any rolls to hit Stunned characters in Combat are done with a bonus of **+2** for the attacker.

  NOTE: Stunned characters roll Skill checks versus their **Prime Skill** at their *normal* Skill score, instead of at **1/2** their Skill score.

Civilian versus Military

In this future time, there is a huge disparity between civilian weaponry and that used by the military. It is illegal in many parts of space for non-military personnel to own military class weapons; but even where this restriction is in place, there are often many exceptions and/or crossovers. Military bodies issue weapons such as knives and clubs to their personnel, for instance, which do the same damage as their civilian counterparts. Even if military forces also use them, any weapons that appear in the section on *Weapons*, in the chapter on **Equipment**, are considered to be civilian class weapons, since it's generally legal for civilians to own them.

Armor In Combat

Armor is classified by **Protective Rating** (PR), and by **Structural Rating** (SR).

PR refers to the amount of damage, per attack, from which the armor protects its wearer, while SR refers to the total amount of damage the Armor can take before it is ruined, and must be discarded or repaired. Players are required to keep track of the Structural Rating of their character's Armor; there's a place for it on the Character Sheet.

> **Example**: *A character named Aperi is wearing a* **flak vest***, which is* **PR 2***,* **SR 20***. She gets shot for* **4** *points of damage, but only takes* **2** *(in this case, to her STAM, which is* **9***), because the vest absorbed the other* **2***. Absorbing those* **2** *points causes damage to the vest, and brings it down to* **SR 18***. Moments later, Aperi is caught in an explosion, which goes off for* **6** *points of*

*damage. This time, she takes **4** points to her STAM, with her flak vest once again absorbing **2**. The vest is now at **SR 16**. Aperi has taken a total of **6** points of damage to her STAM. Without the vest, though, she'd have taken **10**, putting her into HP by this point.*

Some Armor can be combined with others, such as a *Ballistic Shield*. This offers the combined PR of all the Armor types worn. Individual SR must still be tracked for each piece of Armor, being divided equally among them (or in any way that the GM rules). Some Armor incurs DEX penalties, due to awkwardness, and these modifiers are cumulative with any others.

Characters with *Engineering* may be able to fix damaged Armor, at the GM's discretion.

Damage Category

All weapons or attacks are assigned a **Damage Category** (DC), expressed in numbers. The higher the number, the better. Certain types of Armor or cover are able to protect against certain DCs. Attacks that have a lower Weapon DC than what the Armor is rated for (as listed in the description for that Armor) automatically fail to hit, and do no damage at all to the Armor itself (that is, no points come off the Armor's **SR** rating). Such attacks simply can't get past the protection afforded by this Armor or cover.

> **Example**: *Kress has a baseball bat, which the GM determines is equal to* **Club (large)**, *as listed in the chapter on* **Equipment**. *It is* **Weapon DC 2**. *A pirate has just boarded Kress' boat, intent on taking it. Kress attacks with his bat, which would normally be a fearsome assault. Unfortunately, the Pirate is wearing* **Powered Armor**. *According to the description for Powered Armor, it*

*renders its wearer immune to attacks of **DC 2** or below. The Pirate is effectively a walking tank, while Kress only has a stick. He cannot harm the intruder with that weapon at all, nor can he damage the Armor, because every attack just bounces off harmlessly. Kress is about to lose his boat, and possibly his life!*

Some types of Armor do not have a **Weapon DC** listed, meaning that, while they do offer protection to their wearers, any type of weapon attack has a chance to get through.
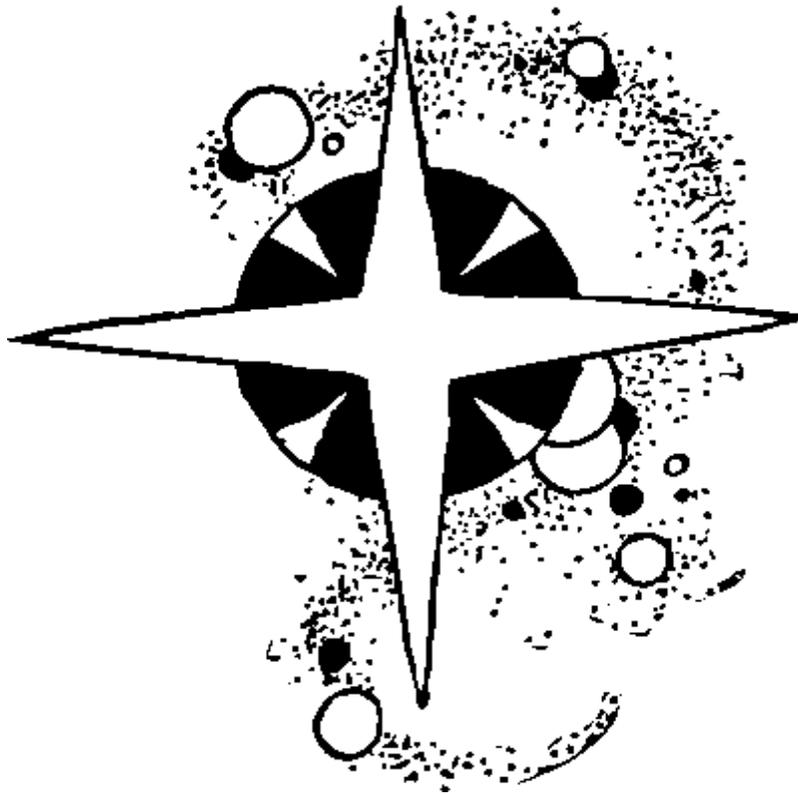
Damage and Healing

An unfortunate side-effect of adventuring across the stars is that characters will, occasionally, find themselves a little worse for wear. Damage can come from almost anything, ranging from accidents, to combat; from toxins, to radiation exposure. This section deals with the way damage is recorded, and how it is applied in the game.

Player characters (PCs) are different from non-player characters (NPCs), in that PCs have a Stamina (STAM) score, while most NPC's do not. Stamina represents the heroic ability to shrug off a certain amount of injury and proceed on. It's something that sets player characters apart from the rest of the universe.

Any damage to a PC comes off their STAM first. When that reaches zero, any further damage is subtracted from their **Hit Points** (HP).
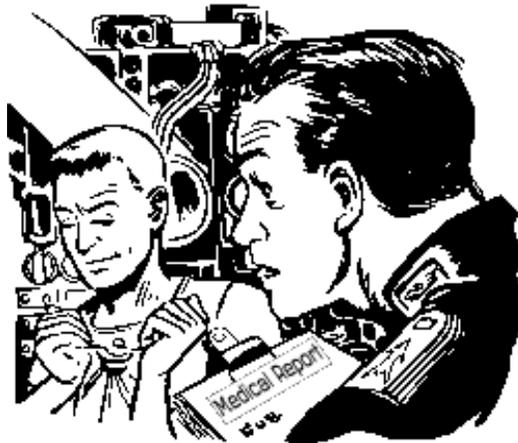
Another element that's only for player characters is that, for any attack that reduces their HP (*not* their STAM), they are allowed a SAVE: Physical roll to reduce that damage by **1/2** (**1/4** for Xmil characters), rounded up, with **1** HP being the minimum. The majority of NPCs do not get this capability, though some *might*, at the GM's discretion (maybe a tough crime boss, an infamous mercenary leader, a despicable pirate captain, etc.)

Stamina

All damage comes off a PC's STAM score first. This represent the character's ability to take a few hits without slowing down, and to shrug off a certain amount of damage like a true adventurer should. STAM points return at a rate of **1** point for every *five minutes of rest*. No STAM points can be regained until *all* HP have been regained.

Hit Points

Once a character's STAM points are exhausted, all damage thereafter comes off a character's Hit Points, or HP. Should a character be reduced to **0** (zero) HP, that character is unconscious (extra damage from the hit that brought them to zero is ignored). They will continue to lose **1** HP per round, down to a negative number equal to their CON, at which point they are dead. Characters at **0** HP or below, who are tended to by someone with the *Medico* Skill (or by someone without it who rolls very well), will be stabilized, but still unconscious. Further medical attention, or natural healing, will be required to bring them to **1** HP or better, at which time they will regain consciousness, but be Stunned for **1d4** additional hours. Under normal circumstances, HP returns at a rate of **1** point per **24** hours of rest. Certain drugs and medical procedures can mitigate the process of healing. (*See* **Medico** *in the chapter on* **Skills**.)

Healing Stun Effects

Stun may be removed from a character by either waiting for the effect to wear off, or through a successful *Medico* Skill check. This can be performed by the victim, themself (who is rolling at **1/2** normal, because of the Stun), or by someone else. Damage points can also be healed at the same time. Success indicates that the proper combination of stimulants, analgesics, and anti-inflammatory drugs has brought this

character back around. Otherwise, the Stun continues until it wears off naturally. Without *Medico*, no STAM or HP will return until Stun has worn off. (See *Stun*, in the chapter on **Combat**.)

Impact Damage

This is something of a special case, as it refers to a character impacting a large surface at high speed, or that surface impacting the character. This may be from a variety of sources, including falling, slamming into a wall, or being hit by something of substantial size.

Extremely deadly impacts, such as being hit by a bus, or plunging off a cliff, may be considered automatically lethal, at the GM's discretion, but if so, the character is still allowed to roll a SAVE: Physical check, in order to somehow avoid an instant death.

Impacts come in three speeds: **Low**, **Moderate**, and **High**. Surfaces come in three hardnesses: **Soft**, **Medium**, and **Hard**.

Soft surfaces might include padded walls, thick carpets, or trampolines. **Moderate** surfaces might include other people, a fruit stand full of apples, or falling uncontrolled into a pool of water from a few meters up. **Hard** surfaces might include metal bulkheads, a car, or the ground.

Low speed might be anywhere from **.5** to **8** kph. **Medium** speed might be from **9** to **20** kph. **High** speed might be from **21** to **40** kph or up.

What exactly constitutes *any* of these factors is up to the GM, and may be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The damage rolled for a character on impact depends upon the interplay between these factors, as listed in the box below:

	Surface: Soft	Surface: Med.	Surface: Hard
Speed: Low	-	1d4+2	1d4+3 *
Speed: Mod.	1d4+1	2d6+2 * (-2)	3d6+3 * (-3)
Speed: High	1d6+1 * (-3)	2d8+2 * (-4)	3d8+3 * (-5)

An **asterisk** means the character must also make a SAVE: Physical, or be Stunned for **1d4** rounds. The minus numbers in parentheses represent negative modifiers to the character's SAVE: Physical score when they roll.

> **Example**: **Leon** *falls out a window and lands on* **Anita**, *who was just walking by, minding her own business. Anita is a person, so she is considered a* **Medium** *surface, The window is* **5** *meters up, but Anita is standing upright, so Leon will come in contact with her shoulders after a fall of about* **3.5** *meters. We'll calculate from there. At the end of* **3.5** *meters, Leon is moving roughly* **30 kph**, *which is* **High** *speed. The GM rolls* **2d8+2** *for Leon. It comes out to a total of* **9** *HP of damage for him, and he also rolls a SAVE: Physical at* **-4**. *His SAVE: Physical score is* **14**. *With the* **-4**, *that's a* **10**. *Leon's player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets an* **11**. *Normally, that would be a successful Save, but the modifier means it isn't this time. He is fully* **Stunned**. *The GM rolls a* **1d4** *for that, and determines he is out of it for* **3** *rounds. Anita gets her own rolls for damage and Stun. However it turns out for her, Leon is just laying on the sidewalk, battered and moaning.*

The above is an example of moderately detailed gameplay with a little bit of Terran-normal falling speed calculation involved. In practice, a GM might make this call entirely off-the-cuff, and probably should. Never let the rules get in the way of fun.

Vacuum Exposure

Exposure refers to direct contact with a vacuum or near-vacuum environment. It's not the cold or heat, the radiation, or even the bends that get you: if you don't have a an airtight bulkhead or working spacesuit between you and the vacuum of space, you will suffocate very, very quickly. You cannot hold your breath in space; the pressure differential between your lungs and the nothingness outside makes that flat-out impossible. You simply start to die.

Space is murderous. It's very touch kills.

Any character exposed to vacuum experiences the following effects *each round* the exposure continues:

- Roll a SAVE: Physical with a **-5** modifier, or be **Stunned** (Spacers roll at **-2**).

- Take **1d12+2** points of damage.

Remember that being Stunned a second time, while you are already Stunned, means you are automatically unconscous. Also remember that any single damage infliction which brings you to **0** (zero) HP means you are automatically losing **1** HP per round thereafter, on top of any more you lose to the vacuum effect next round. (*See the chapter on* **Combat**.)

Drowning

Somewhat similar to Vacuum Exposure, drowning kills by suffocation. Any character who has taken a deep breath before entering the water (assuming it's water; it could be a lot of things) may remain under for a number of **minutes** equal to **1/4** of their **CON** Attribute score, rounded up. After this, they experience the following effects each round that they are under water (*not* each minute; remember, rounds are subjective, so this part might only last a couple of seconds):

- Roll a SAVE: Physical with a **-3** modifier, or be *Stunned*.

- Take **1d10+2** points of damage.

Those with the **Athleticism** Skill have several advantages here. First off, they know how to swim. If they are not under any severe stress (being shot at, being caught in a storm, being attacked by sharks, etc.), they don't need to make any kind of roll to swim successfully; they know how to do it, so they just do it.

Secondly, if drowning should become a factor, the rules above still apply, except that these characters can make an Athleticism Skill check to avoid the effects of drowning for an additional minute beyond **1/4** their **CON**. A minute later, they can try again, this time at **-2**. After another minute, they get another roll, now at **-4**. Then at **-6**, then **-8**, etc. If they fail their Skill check at any point, they begin to drown in the same fashion as above. Even if Stunned, this character may still roll versus their Athleticism at **1/2** their normal level (unless Athleticism is their Prime Skill, in which case they roll at their normal Skill score) in order to regain control and survive an additional minute, with the negative modifiers continuing on from wherever they left off.

Space Vessels

Space vessels come in all shapes and sizes. They are used for a wide variety of purposes, and are, by definition, found everywhere that people are. Some have starjump engines installed, allowing travel between stellar systems. Most do not. Some are gigantic box haulers capable of moving a warehouse of merchandise at one time; some are just tiny drones, the size of a person's fist.

Designation

In the *Stardrifter* universe, space vessels are designated as follows:

- **Ships**: Any space vessel possessing a starjump engine, which also has a human crew or passengers.

- **Boats**: Any space vessel which does not possess a starjump engine, but which does have a human crew or passengers.

- **Craft**: Any space vessel which is not designed to have a human crew or passengers. Craft which do not possess starjump engines are known as *spacecraft*; those that do possess them are known as *jumpcraft*. Remotely operated craft are sometimes called *spacedrones* and *jumpdrones*, respectively, though other terms exist.

Statistics in the game for space vessels and other vehicles share certain commonalities with those used for characters, including **HP**, **Movement**, and **Armor**. Vehicles or other machines, even ones owned by PCs, do *not* have Stamina scores, nor do they get Save checks of any kind.

A truly sapient **Artificial Intelligence** (AI), installed on a space vessel, may be allowed Save checks at the GM's discretion. If so, the AI rolls SAVE: Mental for anything to do with software, and SAVE: Physical for anything to do with hardware. These Save checks, if allowed, do *not* include, nor extend to, the rest of the vessel.

A **Space Vessel Sheet** is provided at the end of the book, which may be copied out and used. If you are creating a space vessel from scratch, fill in the statistics on that sheet as you go through this chapter.
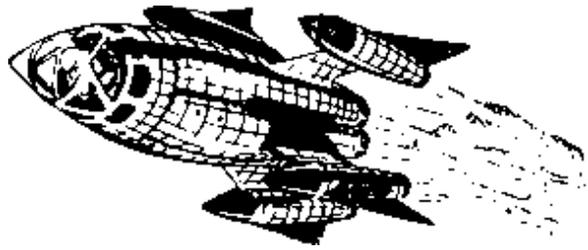
Space Vessel Characteristics

The following represents the characteristics associated with space vessels, as listed on the **Space Vessel Sheet**, at the back of the book.

Name

The name of a vessel can be almost anything, from the poetic (*Fields of Lavender*, for a garbage scow) to the utilitarian (*SolCo Cargo 33*, for a corporate-owned box hauler).

Type

A vessel will be either a *Spaceship* (or just *ship*), with a crew and starjump capability; a *Spaceboat* (or just *boat*), with a crew but *without* starjump; or a *Spacecraft* (or just *craft*), for a vessel without a crew.

Size

This is a reference to the general mass of a vessel, in metric tonnes. Flying a vessel requires the *Piloting: Space* Skill, but larger vessels are harder to control, and demand greater mastery. For the sake of simplicity, Sizes come in three categories:

- **Size 1**: Anything up to 1000 tonnes. (Requires *Piloting: Space 1* or better.)

- **Size 2**: Anything between 1000 and 100,000 tonnes. (Requires *Piloting: Space 2* or better.)

- **Size 3**: Anything between 100,000 and 1,000,000 tonnes. (Requires *Piloting: Space 3* or better.)

Attempting to fly a vessel that requires a higher level of *Piloting: Space* than the

character possesses incurs an automatic penalty equal to the differential between what is required and what they have, in addition to any other situational modifiers the GM may impose.

> **Example**: *Yuri, who only has* **Piloting: Space 1**, *tries to fly a huge modular hauler across a star system. This ship is* **Size 3**, *at 700,000 tonnes.* **Size 3** *vessels require at least* **Piloting: Space 3** *to fly. The difference between this requirement and what Yuri has is* **2**, *which is applied to his Skill Check as a* **-2** *penalty. Yuri's* **Piloting: Space** *score is* **15**. *With the* **-2**, *it's a* **13**. *Yuri's player rolls* **1d20**, *and gets an* **11**. *Success!*

Attempting to fly a vessel with an associated Attribute garners an Attribute check penalty equal to *double* the **Size** category of the vessel, in addition to any other modifiers.

> **Example**: *Sjurinna takes over for Yuri when he has to run to the fresher. This is a bad idea, since she doesn't have the* **Piloting: Space** *Skill at all, and has only been watching Yuri fly this thing for the last few minutes. (If Sjurinna had the* **Drifter** *Background, this might play out differently, but she doesn't, so it doesn't.) With the hauler being a* **Size 3** *vessel, she gets a* **-6** *penalty right off the bat on her Attribute check to try and fly it. The associated Attributes for* **Piloting: Space** *are DEX and WIS. At* **14**, *Sjurinna's WIS is better than her DEX, so the GM lets her player choose that for the Attribute check. With the* **-6** *penalty, her* **14** *becomes an* **8**, *but we're not done yet: the GM assigns an additional* **-2** *as a situational modifier, because the ship is coming to a heavily trafficked area of the star system. Sjurinna's player now has to roll* **6** *or less on* **1d20** *to pull this off. Not impossible, but Yuri probably shouldn't have had all those tacos for lunch!*

Rating

This is a reflection of the over-all quality and technical advancement of the vessel. Ratings run from **0** (nonfunctional) to **10** (highest quality, and in perfect shape). Rating covers many different aspects of a vessel, including such things as sensors, the condition of the vessel, its Movement score, and more. A vessel's Rating is not set in stone: it can change over time. Neglect, space battles, equipment upgrades, and many other things can raise or lower Rating.

Movement

This is a reflection of the maximum movement in real space, expressed in **G-forces** (gees). Higher numbers than a human can survive are entirely possible here, since nearly all vessels designed to have human crews also have inertial compensaters installed, which counteract the deliterious effects of high inertia and sudden direction changes. Movement goes from **0** (no self-propelled movement possible) to **20**. Anything above **10** is a special case, and usually, only craft such as missiles ever go above **15**. Standard safe cruising speeds in most settled systems range from **1** to **6** gees, depending upon local traffic and circumstances.

Maximum normal (that is, non-emergency) Movement of a vessel is equal to it's **Rating** *minus* **Size category**, expressed in gees (minimum **1**). A vessel may run at *double* this (or part thereof) in emergency situations for a number of hours equal to its Rating, before its main drive must be throttled back to normal. After this, it cannot run above its normal speed again until it has had a full engineering strip-down and refit.

> **Example** *A brand new average merchanter, cruising out of the shipyard, might be Rating* **6** *and Size* **2***. When traveling through normal space, its maximum normal Movement would be* **4** *gees. In an emergency, it can travel at* **8** *gees for up to* **6** *hours, before it must be throttled back to no more than* **4** *gees again.*
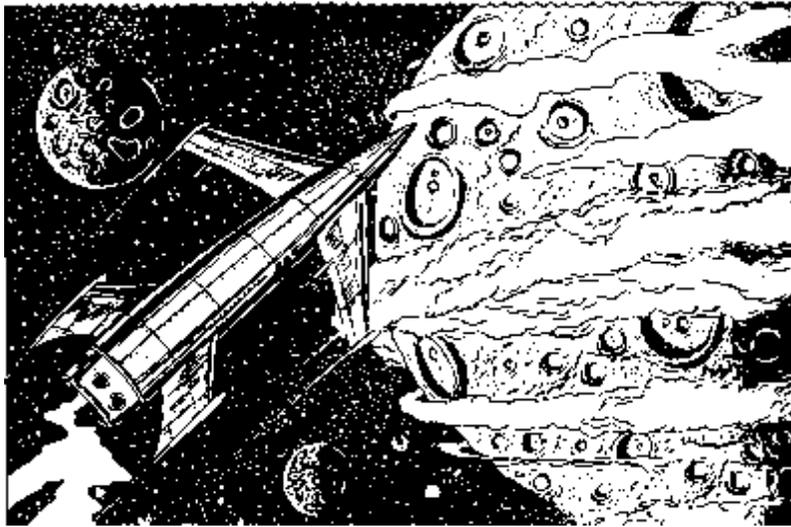
Starjump Range

A reflection of how far a ship (or jumpcraft) can travel in a single starjump, expressed in light years. A ship's starjump range is equal to it's **Rating x 2**. Despite the exact distances traveled, no ship may make more than **1/2** its Rating in consecutive starjumps (rounded up), before requiring a complete shut-down and servicing by the engineering team. This takes a number of hours equal to the vessel's Rating for *each* jump that was made since the last time the engines were serviced (a vessel with a higher Rating is more complex, and requires more time to repair or maintain).

> **Example**: *That same average merchanter, at Rating* **6**, *is able to starjump to a maximum distance of* **12** *light years at one time. It may do this no more than* **3** *times in a row before requiring servicing by the engineering team, and this servicing for* **3** *starjumps will take them* **18** *hours to perform.*

HP

This is a reflection of how much damage a vessel can take before it is destroyed, or at least, becomes nonfunctional. A vessel's HP is equal to its **current Rating score + Size category x 500**. A vessel loses mobility and any weapon systems once it is reduced to **10%** of its undamaged HP score. At zero HP, the vessel is destroyed, and may blow up, crack apart, or just drift off into the black, cold and dead.

> **Example**: *That same average merchanter, at Rating* **6**, *Size* **2**, *would have* **4000** *HP.*

> **Example**: *That same average merchanter, after being attacked by pirates, is now reduced to* **400** *HP. It's main drive fails, and its weapons are down. Life support is still functional, but maybe not for long, should the pirates attack again on their next pass.*

Armor PR

This is a reflection of how much damage a ship's armor can absorb per hit, versus how much the vessel itself takes. A vessel's Armor PR is equal to its **Rating + Size x 10**. (After-market Armor, which can greatly alter this number, may be added on to a vessel at a later time, at the GM's discretion.)

> **Example**: *That same average merchanter, when new, at Rating* **6**, *Size* **2**, *would have had an Armor PR of 80.*

Armor SR

This is a reflection of how much damage a vessel's armor can take before it is rendered useless, and must be repaired or replaced. Once the Armor SR is reached or exceeded, any further damage goes directly off the vessel's HP. A vessel's Armor PR is

equal to its Rating score times **100**. (Again, after-market Armor can greatly alter this number.)

> **Example**: *That same average merchanter, at Rating* **6**, *would have an Armor SR of* **300** *when new.*

Weapons (DEW, Missiles, PD)

In most parts of space, it is legal for a vessel to be armed for the sake of self-defense. Each vessel can have a number of weapon systems installed equal to its **Rating ÷ 2** (rounded up). All weapon systems may be fired once each per round, until ammunition/ordinance is exhausted. DEWs effectively have unlimited ammo, but missile and gun systems have very hard limits. (*See the chapter on* **Space Combat** *for details on the different weapon systems.*)

> *Directed Energy Weapons* (DEW): Types of DEWs include lasers, masers, particle cannons, lantern guns, plasma lances, and more. The exact style doesn't matter for the purpose of these rules. Damage in combat delivered by the system in question is equal to **3d100 x the attacking vessel's Rating**. DEWs draw energy from the vessel's engines, and therefore have unlimited *ammunition*, so long as the engines are online.

> *Missiles*: There are many types of missiles available, but for simplicity's sake, this rule book only covers basic civilian class ship-to-ship missiles. Civilian class attacks from this system are fired from a cylinder with *six missiles*, called a **Missile Pack**. Each such attack lets loose the entire missile pack at once.

> *Point Defense* (PD): This is a close-in civilian class defensive system specifically designed to shoot down incoming civvie missiles and small enemy vessels, at relatively close range. This range is equal to the defending vessel's **Rating x 100** in kilometers. There are limitations and special conditions for PD (*again, see* **Space Combat** *for details*).

Cargo Space

The cargo space available on a vessel depends upon what sort of vessel it is. As a rule of thumb, space vehicles that have any cargo space to speak of (and many don't), have their **Rating + Size × 10** in metric tonnes available for supplies and freight. Anything specifically designated as a *cargo vessel*, however, has **80%** of its Size in metric tonnes of cargo space available.

Passengers

Passengers can travel through space on starships or boats with a sleeping berth of some kind (usually a cabin), or they can travel in suspended animation. The former are said to be *waking*, and the latter, *frozen*.

> **Passengers** (*waking max*): As a general rule, vessels that have room for waking passengers (and many don't) can carry a maximum of **Rating x 2** passengers, who are *not* frozen down in suspended animation. Personnel shuttles can carry a maximum of **Rating x 10** waking passengers. Any vessel specifically designed as a *passenger liner* can carry up to **Rating x 1000** waking passengers.

> **Passengers** (*frozen max*): Cold passage is the most common method of transit in space. Frozen passengers require little-to-no handling or maintenance once they are brought aboard. Each cold passenger, along with a freeze tube and its associated support systems, requires **1** tonne of Cargo space.

Crew

The number of crew members required on a vessel (if any) highly depends upon the vessel and its function (craft, for instance, have no crew aboard at all). As a rule of thumb, the more advanced or better-made the vessel, the more automated it tends to be, and the fewer crew members it requires.

Other factors include the number of waking passengers it can carry (frozen passengers are generally handled like cargo), and the amount of cargo space the vessel possesses. Specialized vehicles, such as emergency response launches, construction boats, courier ships, etc., have precise crew and mission specialist requirements.

As a result, only general estimates for crew numbers are possible, and these are determined as follows:

- **10** minus Rating (minimum of **1**), *and*...

- **1** per every **10,000** tonnes of cargo carried, *and*...

- **1** per every **50,000** tonnes of the vessel's Size, *and*...

- **1** per every **10** waking passengers.

Partial amounts are rounded up (*e.g.*, having between **11** and **20** waking passengers requires **2** crew; having between **10,001** and **20,000** tonnes of cargo means **2** crew; etc.).

There are probably hundreds of exceptions to every rule in this chapter. No two vessels in space are exactly alike, even if they are of the same class. Owners and crews modify and jury-rig systems all the time. Things get altered, improved, or broken. And industry "standards" are sometimes more of a concept, than they are a reality.

Space Combat

Space Combat is handled much the same way as character Combat, including the use of Initiative (either Basic or Advanced), Skill rolls to hit, and Armor considerations. Some elements, such as the Rating of a vessel, bring in their own modifiers, on top of any Skill considerations or SitMods. If a ship is provided with Point Defense (PD), it adds to the attacker's difficulty to actually hit.

"Civilian class vessels are allowed to use deadly force if given no other choice, but must attempt to escape dangerous situations, rather than prolong them."

-Regulation 2864/B7 of the RMA Guidelines
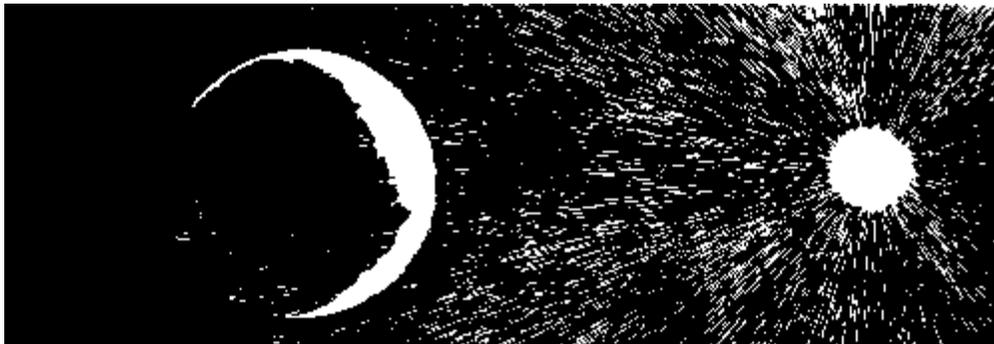
Gunner

Each combatant vessel must have a **gunner**. If a vessel has no weapons, or active defensive systems such as PD, it is not considered to be a combatant vessel (though it still may be the *victim* of one). A gunner might be a trained or studied specialist, a dedicated Artificial Intelligence, the pilot of the vessel, or, if worse comes to worst,

anyone willing to give it a try.

All attacks are based upon the Skill or Attribute score of the gunner, as follows:

- A human gunner's *Gunnery* Skill score (or substitute Attribute if they do not have this Skill). Many NPC gunners will have *Gunnery 1*, for a total score of **11**.

- A dedicated AI's *Gunnery* score. This can vary from AI to AI.

- The human pilot's *Piloting: Space* Skill at **-4**. (If the pilot also has *Gunnery*, then they are only at **-2** in Combat, if piloting the vessel *and* fighting at the same time; or, at their normal *Gunnery* Skill score, if focusing solely on the fight.)

Preparation

Anticipating when a fight might break out between your vessel and another is the hallmark of a smart gunner. Being ready is often the difference between life and death. Even before an enemy's presence is confirmed, preparation matters.

It is important to understand that certain aspects of preparation may be considered hostile acts, in and of themselves. Regular monitoring of the **Situational Status** (S2) from a gunnery station, and the running of various combat simulations are just fine. Attempting to acquire a target lock on a real vessel, painting one with aim-assisting energy beams, or any similar acts of overt aggression or intimidation are *illegal* in most parts of space, if performed without good reason. Anything like this may be questioned later by **Route Management Authority** or military investigators, and a failure to satisfy them could have serious consequences for the gunner, the commanding officers, and even the vessel's owners, up to and including criminal charges.

By international law, anyone sitting in the gunner's seat of a civilian class vessel is

considered to be *as responsible* as the command staff for the combat-related actions of that vessel. It's a gunner's right and responsibility, therefore, to refuse any order to fire if they deem the act to be in violation of the law.

Detection and Targeting

The first consideration of any potential space combat situation is detection of the enemy. For Space Combat, this is dependent upon a vessel's Sensors, which allow for detection at an absolute maximum range of **Rating x 50,000 kilometers** in open space. This detection range drops to **Rating x 10,000 kilometers** in space with large amounts of solar interference, dust, or asteroids. Combinations of factors can drop sensor range down further, even all the way to nothing, if it's bad enough.

In atmosphere, a vessel's maximum sensor range also drops considerably, down to **Rating x 100 kilometers** in Terran-normal air pressures. This range drops even further under greater atmospheric pressure; if the weather is bad; if large amounts of solar radiation are present; or if there is particulate matter in the air (smoke, ash, heavy pollutants, etc.). As with bad sensor conditions in space, combinations of these factors can drop sensor ranges all the way down to zero.

Targeting requires that the gunner (human or AI) power up the vessel's ship defense equipment, and acquire the enemy vessel in their sites. Civilian class vessels are rather limited in the efficacy of their targeting equipment, as the sole function of weaponry on commercial vessels is self-defense, not waging war. Beefing up weapon targetting range is a common (though illegal) after-market modification.

Nominal *targeting* range represents only **25%** of the vessel's *detection* range. Civilian defensive systems work best when the target is relatively close (military vessels do not necessarily have this restriction). Attempts to target enemy vessels within the first

quarter of the attacker's detection range do not get any distance-related negative modifiers applied. Those that are outside of this nominal targeting range can be fired upon, but with increasingly negative modifiers.

Detection Range Targeting Range

0-25%	**Nominal**: No modifiers.
26-50%	**Difficult**: -3 to hit with all attacks.
51-75%	**Far**: -6 to hit with all attacks.
76-100%	**Extreme**: -9 to hit with all attacks.

Enemy vessels beyond Extreme targeting range cannot be attacked using standard methods, since they cannot be detected.

Initiative

Upon closing enough distance for both vessels to detect each other, Initiative must be determined (either **Basic** or **Advanced**). Again, if one vessel can detect the other, but not vice-versa for whatever reason, the one that detects has Initiative. This continues each Round until the other vessel is able to detect its enemy on sensors.

> **NOTE**: While an attack from a vessel or enemy outside of detection range may inadvertantly reveal its location, this is not guaranteed. Tracing an attack back to its source is not always possible. Remember that everything is in motion. If the attacker is out of detection range for the defender, and it fires and moves, it can still remain undetectable.

Space Combat is conducted much like normal character combat, as follows:

Basic Initiative: Each round, someone on the PCs' side rolls **1d20**, and the GM rolls **1d20** for the NPCs. Low roll wins; re-roll any ties. All characters on the winning side attack (any order), followed by the other side. Despite this ordering of the combatants, all attacks in a single round are considered to be happening *more-or-less simultaneously*. Initiative dice are rolled simply to aid in playing through, and understanding, the action.

The Basic Initiative system isn't complicated or precise, nor is it especially realistic, but it's *more* realistic than breaking every gunner's actions down into distinct sequential order. Put simply, it somewhat simulates the frenetic madness of real space combat. It also has the advantage of speeding up the fight.

Advanced Initiative: If a more abstract approach is desired, either as a matter of general preference, or because a particular situation requires granularity, the following method may be used. The Advanced Initiative system has the advantage of precision, but it lacks realism, and can slow combat down.

All gunners roll for Initiative, as defined in the section on *Advance Initiative* in the chapter on **Combat**, using their InitDiff. Lowest number goes first, then the next up the line, and so on. Ties are re-rolled. For purposes of Initiative, an AI's Skill score is equal to the vessel's **Rating** (the AI's ability to fight is only as good as the sensors and weapons it has available, no matter how smart it might be); its subsequent ID is derived from there.

Attack

After Initiative has been determined, gunners may attack upon their turn. To attack, a gunner performs a Skill Check by rolling **1d20** versus *Gunnery* (or whichever substitute Attribute is being used) for each attack. All systems may be fired in the same round, if desired, but each system requires its own roll to hit. Situational modifiers may well apply.

Those vessels which have some sort of **Point Defense** (PD) weapon system installed apply their *Rating* score as a negative modifier to any missile attack rolls. PD does not defend against DEWs , so the modifier is not applied against those attacks. (See *DEWs* and *Point Defense*, below.)

DEWs

Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs) of all sorts exist in this future, but for simplicity's sake in this **Base Rulebook**, we will consider them all as being more-or-less the same thing: a powerful beam of charged particles, plasma, or coalesced light waves. DEW systems get one attack each per round.

DEWs do *3d100 x the attacking ship's Rating* in damage to any vessel it hits. That is, **three** rolls of a **1d100**, added together, then this amount is **multiplied** by the attacker's **Rating**.

Missiles

Civilian class missiles are installed in packs or cylinders, and when fired, the entire pack is launched at once. For game purposes, this is considered a single attack, and they can only be controlled as a single unit.

Missiles carry enough onboard fuel to run at full burn out to the furthest end of a vessel's Detection Range (and more). They can be throttled down by the attacking gunner, in order to save on fuel; they can be shut off entirely, allowing them to coast along ballistically; they can even be parked somewhere, and then reactivated at a later time. However they are used, a failed roll to hit means the missiles have self-terminated safely somewhere out of range, having gone off course, or otherwise missed the target vessel, and failed to reacquire it.

Each successful missile attack does **1d1000 x the attacking vessel's Rating**, in HP damage to the target.

Missile Packs are preloaded by a manufacturer or third-party service provider, and cannot, by law, be *re*loaded by the end user. Whenever a missile attack is made, whether it is successful or not, the pack is emptied. It is thereafter useless until reloaded by a licensed and authorized weapons dealer at a station or spaceport somewhere. Missile Packs cost the location's **Cost of Living x 1000**Q to replace. (See the chapter on **Money**, under *Docking Fees*.)

Point Defense

Point Defense (PD) refers to systems designed to intercept and destroy/disable incoming missiles. It is completely ineffective against DEWs and mass-effect attacks.

PD can take one of three forms:

- *Rapid-Fire Cannon* (RFC), which is a **20mm** rotary kinetic slug autogun linked directly to the vessel's sensors and Gunnery systems for targeting.

- *Single-Fire Cannon* (SFC), which ejects a **150mm** ball that rapidly expands into a cloud of polynium pellets, acting as flak.

- *Neutral Particle Cannon* (Neupac), which is a flavor of DEW specifically designed for close-order attacks, utilizing a low mass/high velocity stream of particles, hitting with great collective force. It is linked to the defending vessel's sensors and Gunnery suite.

At the GM's discretion, PD can be used for close-range offensive attacks against smaller vessels, such as drones, fighters, and shuttles.

Regardless of the exact form, all PD systems induce a **-4** penalty upon the *attacking* gunner's ability to hit with their missile attack.

Time in the Stardrifter Universe

Galactic Time

As humanity spread out among the stars, the **Gregorian Calendar** came along with it. Over the years, though, as people began to settle in far-flug places with different day/night cycles, and different (or even non-existent) lengths of year, the months, weeks, and seasons of Old Earth began to seem irrelevant. Local benchmarks began to creep in to the time references of various settlements and colonies, causing miscommunications and accidents, so it became clear that something more standardized was needed.

Since most of the modified time-keeping systems were based upon the Gregorian Calendar, the new one, called **Galactic Time** (GT), was based on it as well, for the sake of familiarity and ease of adoption. **Year 0** of the GT calendar was pegged as the year of the very first starjump, made by the automated vessel *XA-551* (never mind that the trip was, in fact, a misjump). This equates to the year **2188 CE** in the Gregorian calendar. The new calendar was introduced in **2270 CE**, being recursively started from the year when *XA-551* jumped into history. It still took well over a century before it became a standard throughout settled space.

Stardrifter takes place approximately **500 years** in the future, so the GM looking to set a campaign in a particular period is invited to pick a date of their choosing, somewhere in the **26th Century**. That would place it in the **5th Century Galactic Time**, or somewhere in the **400s**.

Galactic Time vs the Gregorian Calendar
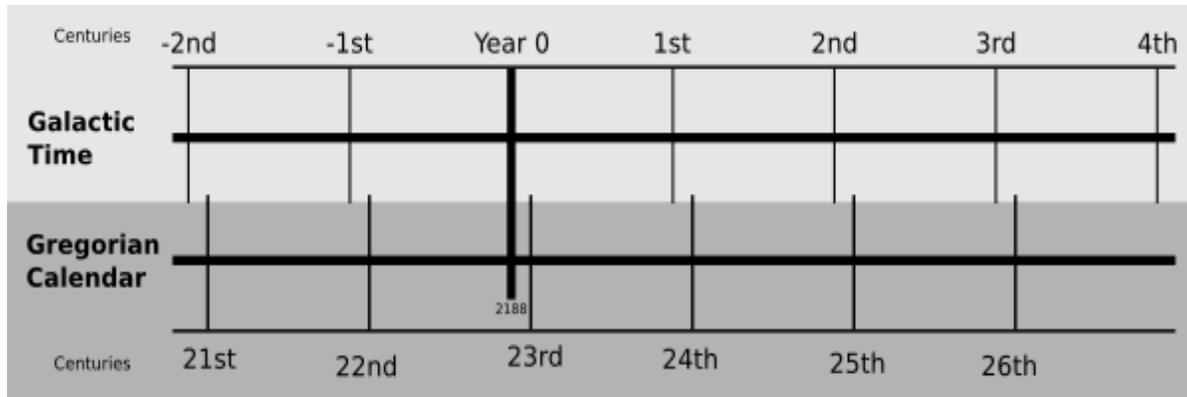
The details of how **Galactic Time** works are as follows:

- **Hours** are *60 minutes* long.

- **Days** are *24 hours* long.

- Days are broken up into three sections, extending from one day into the next:

  > **firstshift** (04:00 to 11:59hrs).
  >
  > **midshift** (12:00 to 19:59hrs).
  >
  > **thirdshift** (20:00 to 03:59 hrs *next day*).

- **Weeks** are numbered numerically, from *01* to *52*.

- **Weeks** are *7 days* long.

- Days of the week are numerically named:

  > **Oneday** (Sunday)
  >
  > **Twoday** (Monday)
  >
  > **Threeday** (Tuesday)
  >
  > **Fourday** (Wednesday)
  >
  > **Fiveday** (Thursday)
  >
  > **Sixday** (Friday)
  >
  > **Sevenday** (Saturday)

- **Months** are *not* counted.

- There are *no* **Time Zones**.

- **Years** are *365 days* long, with no leap years.

- Days are designated numerically, from *Day 001* to *Day 365*.

- Years are broken up into **Quarters**, which are roughly analogous to seasons:

    1st Quarter (Day 001-091, nicknamed "Fresh").

    2nd Quarter (Day 092-182, nicknamed "Grind").

    Midyear Day (Day 183 -- holiday, not counted in any Quarter).

    3rd Quarter (Day 184-274, nicknamed "Leaf")

    4th Quarter (Day 275-365, nicknamed "Rain")

- Years are appended as **1GT**, **2GT**, etc. Years and dates from before Galactic Time are given a negative designation, such as **-1GT**, **-2GT**, etc.

- As **Galactic Time** is used pretty-much universally throughout settled space, the year, quarter, date, and time of day are the same everywhere you go. Starjump from one star system to another, and you find that the date and time are exactly the same in both places. Remember, too, that starjump occurs in the real universe instantaneously, (but see *Subjective Time* below.) Settlers on planets and large asteroids often adopt their own time designations, corresponding to local day/night cycles, or even to true seasons, but if some reference to local time is shared with the wider galaxy, its GT equivelant is always appended.

- The planet **Terra** still uses the Gregorian calendar. Large Earth-based companies and governmental agencies that deal with the wider galaxy often append Galactic Time to any communications or documents. Many, if not most companies and people on Terra, however, fail to do this because of a common cultural bias, to the effect of: "*Earth's calendar came first, so it matters the*

most; figure it out for yourself". Old habits can be hard to break, and annoying to deal with.

- Scientists and researchers, as well as others, use various time-keeping systems specific to their specialities, but GT is nonetheless used for everyday purposes.

Subjective Time

An important side-aspect of starjump, **Subjective Time** refers to the temporal differential between those inside the active jump bubble of a starship in flight, and those in the real universe beyond. Starjump occurs instantaneously in the real universe, but it *does* take time for the vessel itself, and the people within, as they travel through the artificial universe created by the ship. (See the chapter on **Starjump**.)

It is typical for starships to keep track of this differential through the use of two onboard clocks. One keeps Galactic Time, and it pauses when the ship enters starjump. A second clock then starts up, tracking time within the jump bubble. It continues to measure the passage of time normally, until the vessel exits jumpspace, whereupon it stops, and the GT clock begins again. All passengers and crew aboard the vessel then have the amount of Subjective Time they've experienced appended to their IDent records as part of their official identifications. Birthdays and other important milestones that might happen while in mid-jump are sometimes celebrated twice: once when they happen subjectively, aboard the ship, and a second time, when the GT calendar says it's time to do so in the real universe.

Exactly how much ST passes within (and immediately around) the ship is an endemic aspect of three things:

1. The distance being traveled, in **Light Years**.

2. The quality of starjump engine involved, reflected in the ship's **Rating**.

3. The vessel's bulk, reflected in the ship's **Size**.

The formula to determine this is:

- **12 hours** *minus* **ship's Rating per Light Year traveled**, *and...*

- **6 hours x ship's Size**

Example: *The frame carrier* **Steeplechaser** *(Size:* **2***, Rating:* **4***) sets out for a star system called* **Harbordale***, twenty-eight light years away. This is far beyond its starjump range of* **8 light years***, so it will have to make a number of stops, trading goods, and getting fuel and service at ports along the way. It has a schedule to keep, but is not in a rush, so there will be no consecutive jumps. Because of the way that settled star systems and tween-star stations are laid out in the general direction of their destination,* **Steeplechaser** *will have to take a slightly circuitous route, of five starjumps, with a total distance traveled of* **34** *light years, in order to get to Harbordale.*

- **12** hours minus **4** equals **8**.
- **8** times **34** (the number of light years traveled) equals **272**.
- **272** plus **12** (**6** times the Size of **2**), gets us **284 hours**.

Steeplechaser *spends almost* **12 days***, total, in Subjective Time during the cruise, spread out among five starjumps.*

Character Sheet (8.5x11)

Stardrifter
role-playing game
v.0.04.4

Character Name

Creation Date   Game Master

Player

Skills

Name	Attr.	Prereq	Special

Equipment

Name	# of Uses	Cost	Special

Armor

Name	PR	SR	Cost	Special

Weapons

Name	DC	Damage	Cost	Special

Health

STAM

HP

Background

Armor PR

Movement

Wealth

SAVE

Physical

Mental

Gender (if any)

STR   ID

CON   ID

DEX   ID

Attributes

Age

Apparent   Real

INT   ID

WIS   ID

CHA   ID

Portrait

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Stardrifter
role-playing game
v.0.04.4

Character Name

Creation Date   Game Master

Player

Skills
Name | Attr. | Prereq | Special (×5)

Equipment
Name | # of Uses | Cost | Special (×5)

Armor
Name | PR | SR | Cost | Special (×5)

Weapons
Name | DC | Dam | Cost | Special (×5)

Health
Background
STAM
HP

Armor PR
Movement
Wealth

SAVE
Gender (if any)
Physical
Mental

Attributes
Age
Apparent | Real
STR | ID
CON | ID
DEX | ID
INT | ID
WIS | ID
CHA | ID

Portrait

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Acknowledgments

The early versions of the *Stardrifter* game mechanics were based, in part, on **Brent P. Newhall's** wonderful, and wonderfully simple, [Dungeon Raiders](#), a retroclone of the original [Dungeons & Dragons](#) boxed set. *Stardrifter* has since deviated quite a bit from that original source material, but without it, this game would almost certainly not exist. Thanks Brent, for all your great work, and for letting the rest of us play with your toys!

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Finally, special thanks, as always, to my family, **Debbie** and **Emmett**, who put up with all my nonsense. I don't know why they do, but I sure am happy for it.
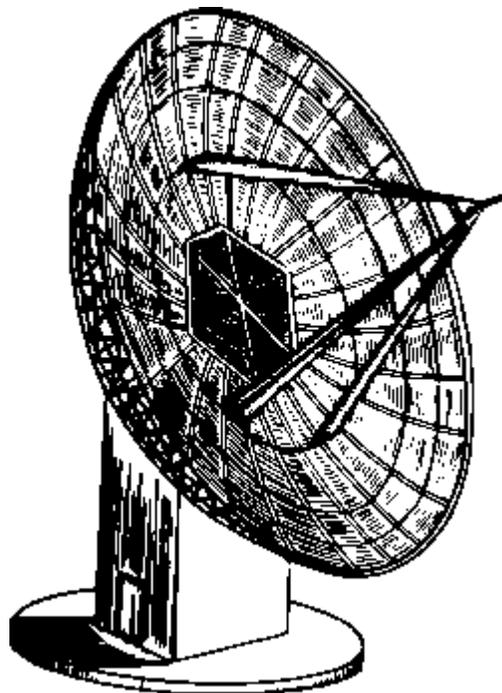
Stardrifter *the RPG*

Were you that kid?

Was a pencil a moon rocket for you?
Was it a defensive missile? A laser beam?

Were clothespins really astronauts,
braving the great unknown?

Was the world a big place back then,
and the sky at night
immeasurably
bigger?

Five
hundred years
from now, humanity
has spread out along the
Orion Arm of the Milky Way.
A supernation collective of allied
star systems competes with an empire,
a massive theocracy, and a powerful
corporate state; while independent freight
haulers, company fleets of cargo carriers,
and shady pirates hovering on the fringes of
settled space all scramble to make ends meet.
Artificial colonies house half the interstellar
population, while terraformed planets
beckon pioneers and outlaws alike.

*Come play in a future where people
and their choices are the ultimate frontier!*

**Welcome to the tabletop space opera role-playing game based on
the Stardrifter series of novels, short stories and podcasts.**

Stardrifter

LIVING A LIFE IN OUTER SPACE