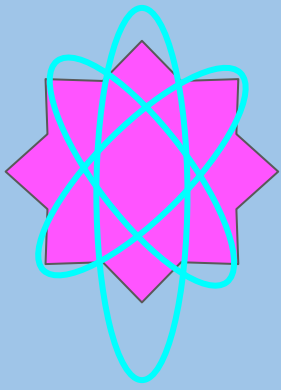# SKYBREAK! MANUAL

And MADCAP!!!

> Scorpio says we need to dumb this down.
> — Wire

FORBIDDEN

The contents of this folder are protected by subsections (b)(6)(ii) and (c)(2) of §109A of the Alliance Charter.

Unauthorized access is punishable by a fine of 36 silver pieces, or a transdimensional exile period of 12 years, or both.

SECTION ONE: COSMOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE SKYBREAK GALAXY

Two thousand years ago, Sal'Sarjade held out his mighty hand and slew each and every god in the galaxy...every god but one. Since that time the gods have~~~~

Rather ~~~~
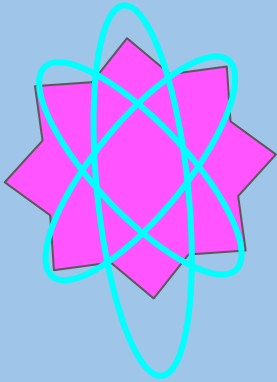
From the Desk of Scorpio Vox
Senior Development Alchemist, Mystic Councillor, DTAA, Esq., Etc.

DATE: 6.4-121
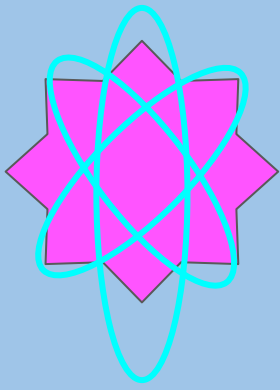TO: Madcap; Research Branch Senior Staff
RE: Seriously?

Madcap (and anyone else who was involved in this),

I will be brief. I was disappointed to see the draft you submitted. I know your team can do better, considering what is at stake here. I gave you 3 days to assemble an operating manual for the mysterious spacecraft currently parked at Stardock 7. What I have received thus far could only charitably be called "notes," much less a finished draft. The "manual" you have drafted does not describe the light reaction system that powers the ship in a manner that a non-alchemist can understand. It contains almost no information about the proper maintenance of the ship's terawatt laser system, bears visible coffee stains on several pages, and its outline of galactic history is sketchy at best. The manual is also rife with spelling and grammatical errors.

We do not have much time. The nameless hero that pilots this spacecraft has signaled their intention to depart. We have only a day or two to give them the information they need to save the cosmos.

In my official capacity as Mystic Councillor, I am ordering you to do all of the following:

- Review Torch & Jackscrew's Alchemical Manual of Style, and bring the notes contained in the manual into conformity, particularly with regards to rules 7, 19, and 413.12(a)(i)(B).
- Correct any and all spelling errors.
- Draft a new Dark Matter Energetics system overview so the hero can actually navigate their ship.
- Rewrite the first section, on galactic history, in a manner that someone not native to this galaxy could clearly understand.
- ~~~~ section describing the proper operation of terawatt

SECTION TWO SUBCHAPTER A: Faster-Than-Light Transportation, Basic Principles and Application

Ships powered by dark matter drives have existed as long as sentient civilizations have traveled the stars, indeed, aside from the mysterious "traveller technology" available only to select members of the mystic council, it is the only means of traveling at superliminal velocities.

By Dolman's Third Postulate, all thumostic current definition aetheric currents, meaning that a agitation must conform to one of the waveform parameters

* $\beta \approx \Psi\Delta/\triangleleft C$

* $\beta \approx \Psi\Delta/\triangleleft 3C$

* $\beta \succeq \Psi\Delta/\triangleleft e$

* $\beta \succeq \Psi\Delta/\triangleleft C \cap E$

* $\beta \succeq \Psi\Delta/\triangleleft 2e$

HEY DUMMY!
You can charge your photonics system by typing "C" and then turn it on by typing "L"

That's how your ship moves around!

Also if it doesn't work that means you just need to wait a bit and do something else...

These correspond to waveforms of platonic solids and their motion three dimensions of macroscopic space and all nineteen dimensions of macrocosmic time. It follows naturally that every spacetime trajectory that follows an unbounded path exceeding c must be made by a sentient entity, and it further follows that every ship must have an artificial soul, and non-sentient entities are incapable of superliminal travel.

Modern Light Reaction Drives operate by agitating aether-adjacent dark-matter filaments via photon-photon chain reactions originating in the ship's Neon fusion reactor. This creates a transomwave function in the dark-matter field which the ship can "ride" for an arbitrarily long period of time. The preferred verb for the process is "breaking", or of course "sky breaking", though it should noted that modern drives have a transom chargeload well below what is necessary to cause a true vacuum inversion, a problem that plagued early versions of the drive

COMMANDS THAT WORK ANYWHERE AFTER THE CHARACTER CREATION SCREEN

HELP: Displays an overview of how to play the game.

COMMANDS: Displays this list of commands.

REPORT OR JUST R: Displays a description of your location.

STATUS: Displays your character's skill bonuses, health, spirit, and adventure points.

THIS COMMAND ACTUALLY WORKS AT ANY TIME

INVENTORY: Displays the cargo your ship is carrying

OBJECTIVES: Displays your character's primary and secondary objectives

TALENTS: Displays a list of your character's talents and how to use them.

REPUTATION: Displays your current reputation with the great cosmic powers.

HOME: Returns you to your home, if you've gotten one. Costs an adventure point.

LOVE: Returns you to your true love, if you've found one. Costs an adventure point.

SAVE: Saves the game.

RESTART: Restarts the game.

UNDO: Undoes the last action

BADASS MODE: Removes the "undo" command for the rest of the game, and gives you an adventure point. (This cannot be undone!)

CREDITS: Displays the Credits

INVENTORY AND STATUS

The "Inventory" Command: This command will display every item in your ship's cargo hold, and on your character's person.

Skybreak! is largely a game about collecting stuff...so this command is pretty important. As the game goes on, you will find new and exciting uses for the cargo you carry in your hold.

When your character makes a choice, and the choice's description lists an item in parenthesis, that usually means the choice will "cost" one of that item.

The "Status" Command: This command will display your character's Skills, As well as their Health and Spirit.

Many choices your character makes will "test" how good you are with a particular skill...more on that later. For now, just know that the higher the number on the status command, the better you are with that skill.

Failing these "tests" will often result in losing a single point (or more) in Health or Spirit. If either Number reaches "zero" You will die, unless you have an adventure point...
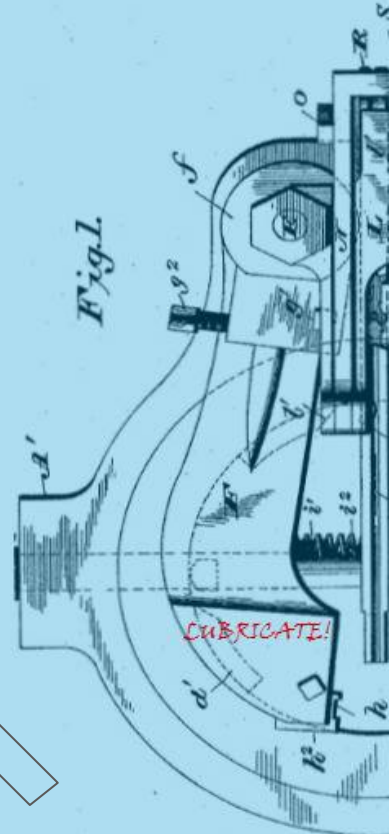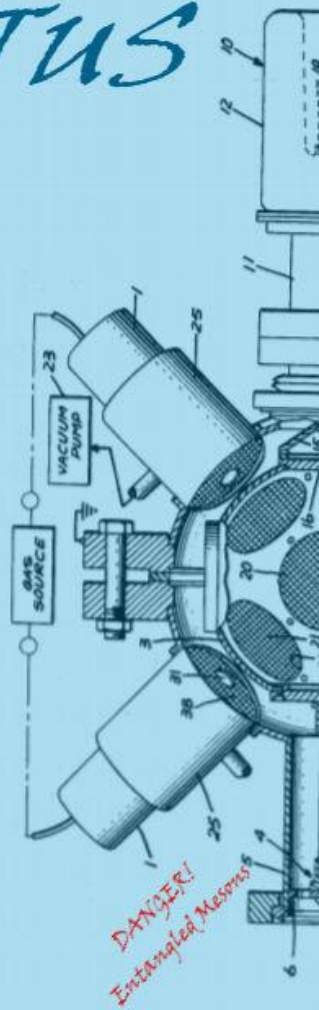
ADVENTURE POINTS: The most important resource in the game. As long as you have 1 adventure point, you won't die...any situation that causes you to die will simply subtract an adventure point, give your character a minor setback, and continue the game. That means **You can take risks if you have adventure points** and **you probably shouldn't take risks if you have no adventure points.**
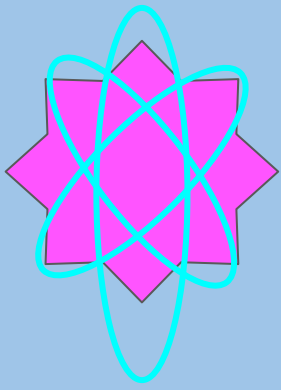
Every character earns adve~~~~~~~ a different way. Read on to find out more...

IMPORTANT

* If you have 5 or more adventure points, the random number generated in skill checks will never be a "1"

* If you have 10 or more adventure points, the random number generated in skill checks will never be a "2"
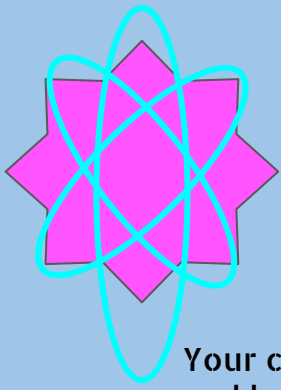
CHARACTER CREATION

Your character is created at the very beginning of the game by selecting...
* 1 Species
* 2 Backgrounds
* 3 Talents
* 1 Skill focus

This manual will describe each background, and how it changes the game. This manual will *not* describe talents in detail...as you play, you'll learn more about how to use those.

Your character's "species" will give a +1 bonus to three skills. There are five potential species:

* <u>Human:</u> Humans are tough pack-hunters that probably originally hail from Irth (but no one knows for sure). Their pack instinct means they excel at social encounters, and their hardy physiology makes them good at staying alive. Humans make excellent storytellers, explorers, and adventurers.

* <u>Syr:</u> Syr are super-intelligent, three-gendered, six-limbed snail-creatures from the far side of the galactic core. Syr are loners and spend long periods cooped up in their shell. Their six-lobed brains make them good scientists.

* <u>Goblins:</u> Goblins are reptilian creatures that prefer to live deep underground. They are strong and inventive beings by nature, and make excellent scientists and adventurers.

* <u>Elves</u>: Elves are...well, no one really knows what elves are. Elves hail from mysterious worlds far beyond the galaxy. They are preternaturally good at magic, and are therefore consummate sorcerers.

* <u>Something Else Entirely:</u> The galaxy is full of strange creatures. Instead of playing one of the above species, you're free to create your own. This species has no assigned skill bonuses and simply lets you pick an extra skill focus at the end of character design.

CHARACTER CREATION (cnt.)

Your character has 2 backgrounds. Backgrounds determine how you win the game, and how you accrue adventure points. Each will affect the game dramatically. They are listed here in order of *relative ease of play*.

EXPLORER: Explorers earn adventure points by discovering new planets. They win the game when they've discovered a new planet of each kind (Planetoid, Rocky, Small Moon, etc…).
Advantages: Explorers have useful skill bonuses, and earn adventure points quickly. The Explorer's win condition is relatively straightforward and fast.
Disadvantages: Explorers have only a limited number of adventure points they can earn. This background is not good for a long game.

ADVENTURER: Adventurers earn adventure points by entering into risky encounters, or by making risky moves in encounters. They win by getting filthy rich.
Advantages: Adventurers are much better at surviving failed encounters.
Disadvantages: This background confers no skill bonuses, and the win condition takes a while.

EARTHLING: Earthlings win by returning to Earth. They have no way to earn adventure points.
Advantages: Earthlings start out with extra adventure points, and treasure. The Earthling's win condition is very straightforward.
Disadvantages: This background confers no skill bonuses, and the win condition takes a while.

STORYTELLER: Storytellers win by collecting stories, and they gain adventure points by acquiring certain combinations of stories (visible on the objectives list).
Advantages: Storytellers have a very easy win condition, and somewhat useful skills
Disadvantages: Storytellers gain adventure points using the same resource they use to win.

SCIENTIST: Scientists win by collecting research data, and they gain adventure points by acquiring certain combinations of research data (visible on the objectives list).
Advantages: Scientists have very useful skills and a fairly easy win condition.
Disadvantages: Scientists gain adventure points using the same resource they would use to win.

SORCERER: Sorcerers win by collecting lore, and they gain adventure points by acquiring certain combinations of lore (visible on the objectives list).
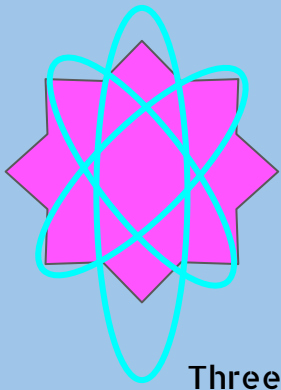**Advantages:** Sorcerers have extremely useful skills.
Disadvantages: Only experienced players will be able to use a sorcerer's skills well. The Sorcerer's win condition takes a long time, and uses the same resource they use to make adventure points

SPACE CADET: Space Cadets win by becoming famous, and they gain adventure points by crashing their spaceship (no really!)
Advantages: Space Cadets have the most powerful set of skills.
Disadvantages: In order to gain adventure points using the Space Cadet background, you need to lose a space battle…so it's more like insurance…also their win condition takes a long time.

CHARACTER CREATION (cnt.)

Three additional backgrounds have large and complex stories associated with them. They are very challenging, and at their finale they usually involve very difficult skill checks which you are unlikely to succeed at without particular character designs (figuring out the right design is half the fun). These three backgrounds all have a chance of gaining adventure points when their story advances.

STARFARER: Starfarers are barbarian nomads from the edge of the galaxy. The Starfarer storyline will test your skill at space exploration and combat.

INQUISITOR: Inquisitors are Syr, members of the Inquiry, an entire civilization of academic busybodies. The Inquisitor storyline will test your ability to build a character that uses a small number of specific skills.

SKYBREAKER: Skybreakers are an alliance of galactic heroes that live near the core. The Skybreaker storyline will test your ability to build a versatile character that can handle anything the galaxy throws at them.

===
GENERAL CHARACTER DESIGN TIPS
===

Unlike Most Role-playing Games, Skybreak! Rewards broad Rather than Deep Character Builds: give your character diverse skill bonuses!

Skybreak! Has a Complex, very involved backstory that You will learn about as you play. No Lore background is necessary.

Skybreak! Is very forgiving. As long as you have an adventure point, you can take big risks.

That means your character should be built so you can maximize your adventure points Income. In general, it's a good idea to focus on winning via one background. That way you can use the other background to generate adventure points.

SKILLS AND SKILL CHECKS

Most choices your character makes in Skybreak! will "check" a particular skill, to see whether your character succeeds or fails. This system is very similar to the one found in most pencil and paper role-playing games.

The game selects a number between one and ten, and adds that to your character's skill bonus (these are displayed on the "Status" list). If the resulting number is <u>greater than or equal to</u> the difficulty of an encounter, your character succeeds. Otherwise, they fail. Consequences follow from both.
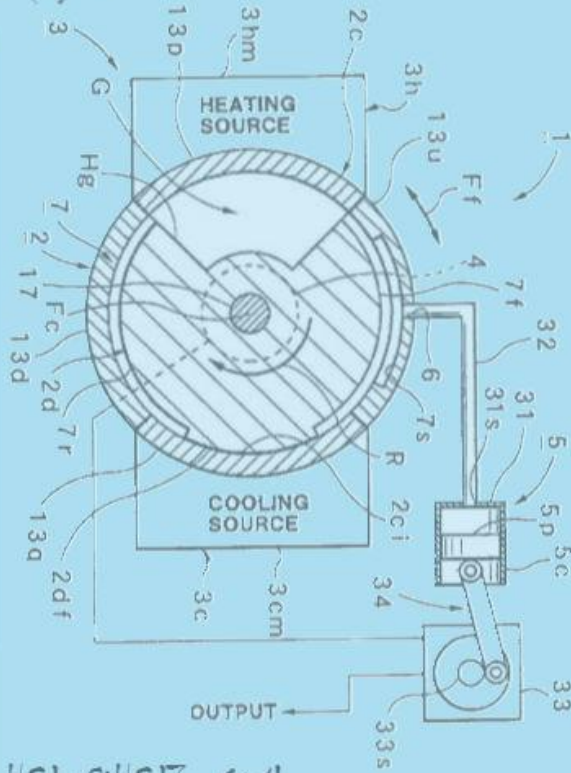
You can determine the difficulty level of an encounter as follows:

- If an encounter only lists a single skill, the difficulty level is always "5."
- If an encounter lists two skills, the difficulty level is always "4" for the first skill, and "5" for the second.
- If an encounter lists three skills, the difficulty level is always "4" for the first skill, "5" for the second, and "6" for the third.

A small number of encounters will have a "*" symbol next to the skill they check. This means the encounter is very difficult. The difficulty level is "8" for this listed skill.

A very small number of encounters will have a "**" symbol next to the skill they check. This means the encounter is almost impossible. The difficulty level is "10" for this listed skill

HAVING A " 1 " IN A SKILL MEANS YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT IT.

HAVING A " 3 " IN A SKILL MEANS YOU'RE A MASTER (YOU HAVE A 10% CHANCE OF FAILING A DIFFICULTY " 5 " CHECK")

SKILLS AND SKILL CHECKS 〖cnt.〗

What follows is a list of all 14 skills in the game, and their uses.

ACUMEN: Your character's social, artistic, and tactical knowledge. The Acumen skill is useful for interacting with friendly sentient life forms, building your reputation, playing games, and making art.

ASTRONOMY: Your character's skill in operating telescopes and particle detectors. The Astronomy skill is useful for studying stars, planets, and black holes, and for stabilizing antimatter.

BIOLOGY: Your character's skill in alien, human, animal, vegetable, bacterial, and viral anatomy and physiology. The Biology skill is useful for studying alien life forms, and capturing wild animals.

GUNNERY: Your character's training in energy weapons, both handheld and attached to spacecraft. The Gunnery skill is useful for operating ray blasters, turbolasers, sonic shotguns, and arc emitters...all manner of space weaponry really.

HISTORY: Your character's knowledge of the past, including aptitude for dead languages and ancient customs. The History skill is useful for studying ruins and rare manuscripts.

MINING: Your character's skill in excavation, mineral extraction, and demolition. The Mining skill is useful for exploiting resources in deep space and on the surface of planets. It is not very useful for much else…

OCCULTISM: Your character's knowledge of the arcane, including their aptitude with psychic and alchemical equipment and their ability to peacefully interact with eldritch beings. The occultism skill is useful for researching forbidden secrets and surviving encounters with strange creatures that live in the void beyond the galaxy.

PILOT: Your character's ability to operate Spacecraft and terrestrial vehicles. The Pilot skill is useful primarily for avoiding damage in space combat...also racing.

As you play, you will find a small number of ways to permanently increase your skill bonuses...but there are not many of these.

PERCEPTION: Your character's visual and aural acuity, including their ability to notice clues, sense danger, and spot anomalies on sensor readouts. Perception is useful for avoiding danger and locating treasure.

SUBTERFUGE: Your character's ability to mislead, trick, cheat, and lie. The Subterfuge skill is useful for running spy networks and swindling people out of their hard-earned cash.

STEALTH: Your character's ability to avoid detection and slip away unharmed. Stealth is useful for stealing stuff, and avoiding horrible monsters.

SURVIVAL: Your character's ability to endure extreme heat, cold, hunger, thirst, and pain, as well as their ability to live off the land and conserve food, water, and oxygen. Survival is useful for exploring the surface of inhospitable worlds.

STRENGTH: Your character's physical prowess, especially with melee weapons and in hand-to-hand combat. Strength is useful for slaying aliens...slaying people...slaying robots...slaying anything really.

TECHNOLOGY: Your character's ability to operate sophisticated equipment including computronics, handheld sensors, fusion reactors, and particle accelerators. Technology is useful for discovering new things, and repairing broken things.

All of these skills are designed to be equally useful, but in different ways. Some are far more important for staying alive in dangerous situations.

In general, it's probably a good idea to build a character that has **at least +2** *in two of the following skills:* **Survival, Technology, Gunnery, or Strength.**

Talents can give your character different ways to use their skills.

All talents give a +1 boost to an associated skill.

Ship Subsystems (and Repair)

Your ship has several critical subsystems. If they break You can type "repair" to try to fix them. This will count As an action or "turn" within the game, and it will usually fail. It's more likely to work if your Technology skill is high. You can't repair your Ship during encounters or in space battles.

Your ship also has a "bow", a "hull" and a "stern." Attacks can damage all three of these. Your ship will work just fine if they're damaged...but if all three are destroyed you're toast

The Computronics System: Your ship's Computronics system helps you run sophisticated scanning equipment, like your primary telescope.

The Optics System: Your ship's Optics System charges and focuses your laser weapons. You can't attack with your ship if your optics system is damaged

The Defense Grid: Your ship's Armor and Shields. Your Defense Grid Automatically repairs after every space battle
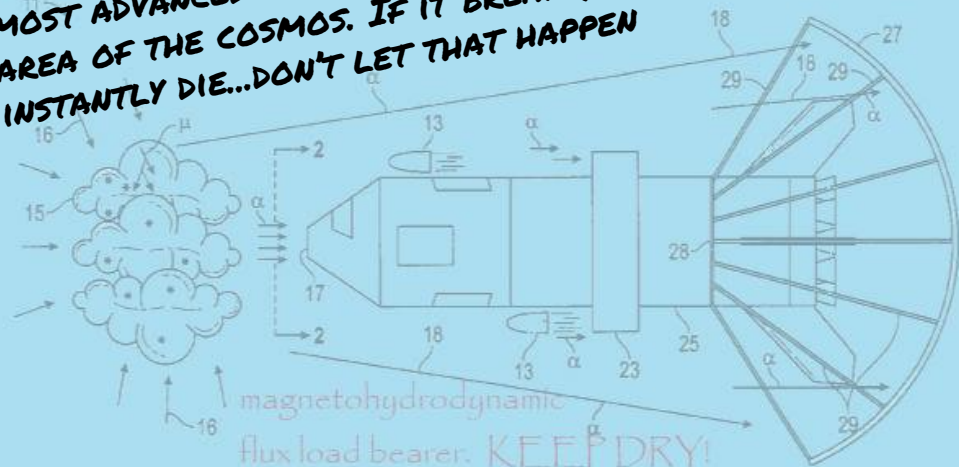
The Avionics System: Your ship's Avionics system helps steer and accelerate...you can't perform complex flight maneuvers if your avionics system is damaged

The Reactor: Your ship's reactor is probably the most advanced single piece of technology in this area of the cosmos. If it breaks, you will instantly die...don't let that happen

If anything breaks, and you can't fix it yourself, just visit a spaceport.

You'll find these on well-populated worlds. They'll help you out.

magnetohydrodynamic flux load bearer. KEEP DRY!

SPACE COMBAT

Space Combat is risky, complex, and high-stakes...an area best left to professionals.

In a space battle, you will trade attacks with an enemy spaceship, your goal is to either destroy the enemy or escape. Many talents are usable only in space battles, and dramatically change how combat plays out.

In a space battle, the game will track your ship's HEADING and RELATIVE VELOCITY. You want both of them to be as high as possible, but it is possible to compensate for both by having a high gunnery or pilot skill, respectively.

On your turn, you will have the option of increasing your speed or heading, firing a laser weapon at one of five FIRING SOLUTIONS, or executing a MANEUVER (described below).

ATTACKING:

When you attack an enemy, the game will use the following formula to determine whether you hit:

[A random number between 1 and 10]+[Your Gunnery Skill]+[The Enemy's Listed Difficulty Modifier]+[Your Listed Heading Modifier]...if this number is greater than or equal to 5, you hit, and the target is destroyed.

After you make a move, the enemy will make a move as well.

DEFENDING:

If the enemy chooses to attack you, the game will use the following formula to determine whether they hit:

[A random number between 1 and 10]+[Your Pilot Skill]+[The Enemy's Listed Difficulty Modifier]+[Your Listed Velocity Modifier]...if this number is less than 5, they will hit.

IF YOU ARE HIT:

The game will check whether your defense grid is working. If it is, there is a 50% chance it will be destroyed and a 50% chance it will hold. If it is not working, the enemy attack will hit either
* Your computronics...then your optics...then your avionics...then your reactor
* Your bow...then your stern...then your aft

MANEUVERS:

Every turn, you will have the option of executing a randomly-chosen maneuver. This is most likely to be a BARREL ROLL. If you try to do a barrel roll, the game will use the following formula to determine whether you succeed.

[A random number between 1 and 10]+[Your Pilot Skill]+[The Enemy's Listed Difficulty Modifier]+[Your Listed Velocity Modifier]...if this number is greater than or equal to five, you will increase your heading and velocity at the same time.

There are a few other Maneuver options as well, though they are rarely presented...many are very powerful, don't underestimate them.

ATTACKING ENEMY WEAK SPOTS:

Some enemies have a "weak spot"...this is always the 5th firing solution. If you hit this firing solution, the enemy will instantly die. This weak spot is always very hard to hit. If you attack this weak spot, the game will use the following formula to decide if you hit:

[A random number between 1 and 10]+[Your Gunnery Skill]+[The Enemy's Listed Difficulty Modifier]+[Your Listed Heading Modifier]...if this number is greater than or equal to 8, you hit, and the target is destroyed.

ESCAPING:

You will usually have the option of running away, rather than fighting. If you try to run, the game will use the following formula to decide if you escape:
[A random number between 1 and 10]+[Your Pilot Skill]+[The Enemy's Listed Difficulty Modifier]+[Your Listed Velocity Modifier]...if this number is greater than or equal to 8, you escape, and the battle instantly ends.
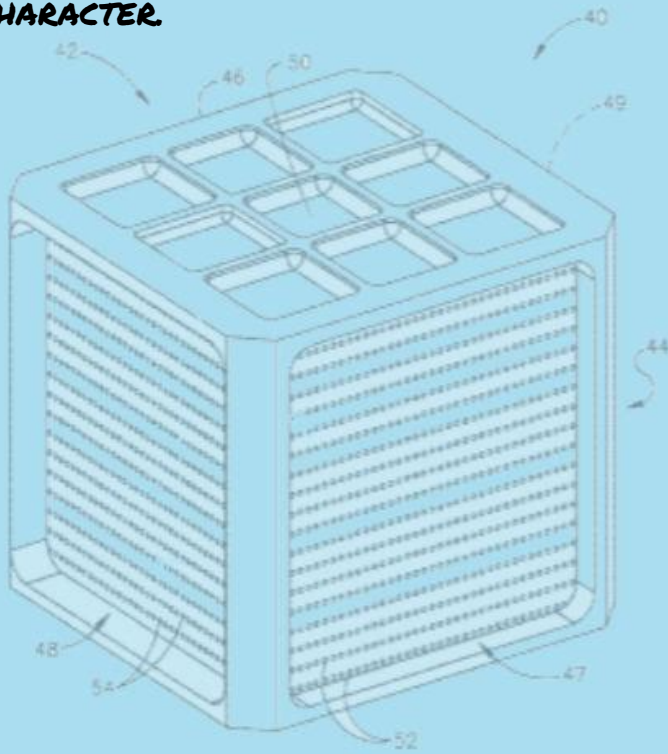
PATCHING DAMAGED COMPONENTS:

Every battle, you will have the option to patch your damaged optics or avionics system using a piece of equipment from your inventory. Doing this does not use your action...but you can only do it once for each subsystem. After the battle is over, this subsystem will be broken.
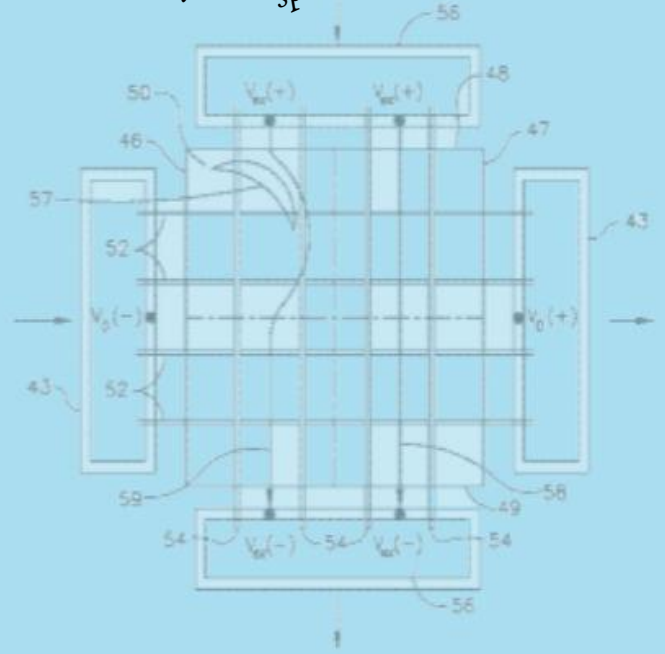
Final Notes and Tips

"Drift Along"/"Pass the Time":
Almost every location has an option labeled "drift along" or "pass the time"...this is usually the most boring thing you can do at a location, with a good chance of nothing happening at all...but there are some fascinating encounters hidden here. This option also has a much higher chance of healing your character.

Homes: Periodically your character might find locations that they feel like staying at for a while. Homes unlock different options for different character builds. You can get a permanent home by increasing your reputation to "5" with a major galactic power.

Once you have a permanent home you can travel there from anywhere by typing "home" and spending an adventure point.

If your character is human, they might fall in love. Humans have a tendency to do that...not all humans, but a lot of them.

If this happens, you can return to your true love from anywhere in the universe by typing "love" and spending an adventure point.
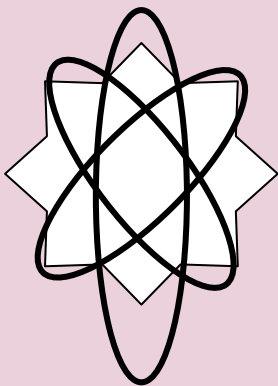
There are 8 characters out there you can fall in love with.

Madcap + Cade

Skybreak is a game about exploration and discovery. There are no wrong choices, and It is difficult to know, in advance, what the consequences of your actions will be.

Take chances and make mistakes. In later playthroughs, you will be able to apply what you've learned to play a deeper and more interesting game...

Credits (and Legal Stuff)

Skybreak! would not exist without the imaginative contributions of several close friends:

* <u>Robb D.</u> (Who helped build a game set in the same universe long ago)
* <u>Ben C.</u> and <u>Louis S.</u> (Who helped develop the setting and characters)
* <u>Katherine S.</u> (Who was the target audience for this game)

All of the following people playtested this game (a lot!):
* Corgi
* Duncan B.
* Ian M.
* Kenneth P.
* Katherine S.
* Louis S.
* Mizal
* Triclops

Skybreak! owes a great debt to many pulp, science fiction, and fantasy writers, including (but certainly not limited to):
* Luc Besson
* Edgar Rice Burroughs
* G.K. Chesterton
* Robert E. Howard
* Stephen King
* Madeleine L'Engle
* H.P. Lovecraft
* "Doc" E.E. Smith
* Bill Watterson
* H.G. Wells
and of course...
* Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany

Special thanks to MAZ for making the game work online

Known Psywave Transmission Channels

Channel H: Strange Emanations from the Edge of Space and Time
Channel L: Vethic Missionary Communications
Channel M: Inquiry Transmission Band
Channel X: Transworld Alliance Military Communiques
Channel Z: All Static! All Day! Forever!