

March 26, 2008

*Book 1: Characters and
Combat*

*SPIRIT OF THE FAR
FUTURE*



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This game is the collective work of Brad Murray, C.W. Marshall, Byron Kerr, and Tim Dyke. We all had different but essential roles to play.

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Introduction

What is *Traveller*? The answers to this question are as many as the players themselves (indeed, there are surely more opinions than there are players). The variety of answers needs to be acknowledged in order to position this current project. We first encountered *Traveller* in the early 1980s, at a time when we were young, impressionable, and heavily influenced both by *Star Wars* and by initial encounters with *Dungeons and Dragons*. *Traveller* was related to both, but it was also clearly different than both. So what is *Traveller*?

For some, what makes *Traveller* special is its science fiction setting: a remote imperial power spanning thousands of systems, with communications constrained by a faster-than-light drive that always takes a week, and requires huge allocations of fuel space. Alien cultures were few. Vastly different technologies existed between neighboring systems—projectile weapons and cutlasses were used instead of blasters. This isn't *Star Wars*.

For others, the uniqueness of *Traveller* lies in its gameplay mechanics: characters could start out middle aged, having had a full career before play actually started, seasoned veterans who weren't going to change much in skills and abilities, no matter how long they were played. Combat was lethal. The system also allowed a wide variety of play: large-scale naval warfare, carefully executed mercenary maneuvers, rag-tag groups in small spaceships attempting to remain solvent. All of these made clear that this wasn't *D&D*.

Successive iterations of the game changed the mechanics through the 80s and 90s (and in the current decade, with T5 due to appear in less than a month), and this reduced a great deal of the default mechanical associations with *Traveller*. With each new version, the setting became increasingly fleshed out, so that issues of “canon” can be heatedly debated among fans, on minor events in the campaign setting, a process facilitated and exacerbated by the internet. Seen this way, not even *Traveller* is *Traveller*—not any more, at least.

Traveller is “vacc suit” and “air/raft”, it is Free Trader Beowulf still awaiting rescue, it is little black books and Optima font in italics. It’s a week in jump, Pilot-3, and skimming gas giants to refuel your ship. With so many different possible answers, what possible justification can there be for another *Traveller*, *Spirit of the Far Future*?

Spirit of the Far Future is meant to evoke the original *Traveller* game, *Classic Traveller* (or CT) as it is now known, while mating it with the pulpy feel and pick-up style of *Spirit of the Century* (SotC). Why bother?

We want to play in the CT setting. It fires the imagination, provides for exciting narrative range, enables a deep sense of science fiction gameplay, and hearkens back to our youth. And we do play CT, but the system does have limitations (notoriously, a lack of skill resolution mechanic) and the layers of detail provided by later versions do not seem to be improvements, wither losing something we perceive to be crucial for *Traveller*, or mapping it onto a system that seems to us fundamentally antithetical (*GURPS* or *d20*) to what we perceive to be important to CT. SotC, which uses the *FATE* system, does not seem antithetical in the same way. Indeed, playing SotC led us to believe that the action resolution system was very satisfying, that character generation provided great character depth and background narrative. Further, it was fun, and at our table for the first time everyone wanted to run a game, an enthusiasm fuelled because it gave players a feeling of control. SotC bills itself as being ideal for pick-up games: making characters and running an adventure over the course of an evening. It does not target itself for campaign play, though it doesn’t rule it out. And all of these things seemed to us to mesh with what was at the heart of the CT experience.

Spirit of the Far Future still feels to us like *Traveller*. We hope it feels like *Classic Traveller*, though that of course is open for others to judge. We like to play with the little black books, but SotC has provided a rich mechanic that seems to allow the sort of CT fun that we remember. So, in the spirit of CT, we’ve presented the material in terms of the three books that comprised the original release of *Traveller* in 1977.

This book, *Book 1: Characters and Combat*, provides a character generation system drawing on SotC but maintaining the flavour of CT. It also provides rules for tactical combat and can be used as a tabletop game by itself. Making guys, and then killing them.

Book 2: Starships, provides details of ships, and provides a unique means of having them fight one another (developed out of SotC and another game, *AGON*). It, too, can serve as a stand-alone game. It does not provide rules for creating starships: the wealth of material in CT dedicated towards this is crucial to the *Traveller* feel and does not need to be re-invented. We have, instead, provided

guidelines for adapting ships built under the CT system to our system. Making ships, and then blowing them up.

Book 3: Worlds and Adventure, provides the frame that is the role-playing game, with all that is needed for campaigning and adventuring in space. Again, the randomly generated systems provided by the original book 3 is an imaginative system that we were not going to better, though rules are provided for adapting the UWP's (universal world profiles) from CT to *Spirit of the Far Future*.

This is not quite the division of material in the original little black books, but it clearly allocates the material in a way that will be most useful for gameplay. Finally, we present a supplement (what is *Traveller*? another supplement...), which details a subsector suitable for play, *Supplement 1: The Dunbar Subsector*. Not necessary for play, but a sandbox to play in for those who don't want to make their own.

Spirit of the Far Future promises to provide the feel of CT within the mechanics of *Spirit of the Century*. These rules presume the player (or group) has access to SotC rules, and has some familiarity with the *Traveller* setting: we have drawn primarily on *Classic Traveller*, but other rulesets in the *Traveller* setting should work as well. For material not covered here, "crunch" (specific rule mechanics) should default to SotC, and "fluff" (narrative conventions and details from the setting) should default to *Traveller*. Fair warning, though: as a game, *Spirit of the Far Future* is really a set of conversion notes, allowing you to play your *Traveller* game (which you must already own to make any use of this at all) with your hot and modern *FATE* version 3 game mechanics as embodied in Evil Hat Production's, *Spirit of the Century* (which you also should own).

Is this *Traveller*? Is anything? At our table, *Spirit of the Far Future* keeps the best of both systems, and yields an exciting, fast-paced, science fiction RPG that is fun. Fun for us, and fun for those who didn't spend part of their youth rescuing the Annic Nova. What is *Traveller*? *Traveller* is anything that remains true to the spirit of the far future.

Playing the Game

Spirit of the Far Future is a role-playing game. Honestly, if you're here already then you have a copy of *Classic Traveller* kicking around somewhere and you have either the System Reference Document (SRD), which is freely available online, or a real copy of *Spirit of the Century* available as well. Both of these products tell you what a role-playing game is and what you do to be in one. Both tell that story better than we ever could, so go read them again.

All conflicts in this game are resolved using the *FATE* mechanics as elaborated in *Spirit of the Century*. That is, you roll your set of four fudge dice (or 4d3-8), add an appropriate skill, and compare against some difficulty level which might be someone else's roll.

A lot of this game is still *Traveller* in its classic form. As such you'll also need a pair of six-sided dice because sometimes we're just going to tell you to go use *Traveller*. World creation, for example, is in our opinion perfect in *Traveller* so we're not going to re-design it here. You'll need six-sided dice to use your *Traveller* material.

Fudge Dice Odds

| roll | odds | % |
|------|-------|-------|
| -4 | 1/81 | 1.24 |
| -3 | 4/81 | 4.95 |
| -2 | 10/81 | 12.35 |
| -1 | 16/81 | 19.75 |
| 0 | 19/81 | 23.46 |
| 1 | 16/81 | 19.75 |
| 2 | 10/81 | 12.35 |
| 3 | 4/81 | 4.95 |
| 4 | 1/81 | 1.24 |

Referee?

Yeah. Many role-playing games refer to the referee as “Storyteller” or “Game Master” or something similar. We are retaining the original *Traveller* term “referee”. Why? Well here more even than in that original work the person in this role is an arbitrator and a facilitator. He’s not telling the story (all the players are) and he’s not mastering the game (players are equal but different).

Try to let go.

Seriously, it works. It’s fun. And, if you are a skeptical referee reading now, let me try to sell it a little: it makes your work easier.

As with any great idea, we are building here on (often stealing outright from) the work of others. The crux of what you need to do comes from Vincent Baker, author of the ground-breaking game, *Dogs in the Vineyard*: “say yes or roll the dice”. What that means is, when a player has an idea about what he wants to happen, it can often be the case that what they want doesn’t mesh with what the referee wants. In this game, we want you to quash that instinct to tell the player, “no.” Instead, look at the idea, ignore your plans, and either say, “yes” or set a difficulty and make them roll to see what happens.

Alternatives to “yes” exists that are not “no”. One popular one is, “yes, but...” In this case the referee agrees but adds a complication. If everyone is grinning and

nodding, he did it right. Another is “yes, and...” Here the referee agrees and escalates the player’s idea even further—the player wanted to hunt down some food and he came back with food and a new friend from the wilderness.

As you read on you will see that players sometimes get to say something that’s true that the referee doesn’t get to mediate much. Let the players run with it and see where it goes. Having that power is part of what’s fun about this system for the players, and we hope you’ll find that it’s at least as much fun for the referee.

Real Time

Campaign: a series of stories and not necessarily with an end in sight.

Story: a single storyline planned by the referee.

Session: one sitting’s play.

Scene: all of the play that takes place in a single setting—a fight, an argument, or maybe a scientific survey.

Round: one trip around the table in which everyone gets a chance to roll.

Players get the Power

We said “it’s a role-playing game” like that tells you all you need to know about role-playing games, and that’s both true and false. It’s true because we’re not going to tell you how to do that but it’s false because there are some things you may think are true about role-playing games that are not true in *Spirit of the Far Future*. Specifically, player authority.

Now, this isn’t a game in which the players drive the action without the input from a Game Master, Story Teller, or referee. There is indeed someone in charge who establishes the setting and mediates the rules. But many of the ways players can use their characters’ skills give the player more power over narration than you might be comfortable with.

The Ladder

In *FATE* successes and difficulties are rated by numbers or by the terms on The Ladder. Our Ladder here is slightly different from the *SotC* Ladder—well in fact

it's only different in a single respect: where we play the term "Fair" just doesn't logically fit between "Average" and "Good". So ours replaces it with "Decent" instead.

In *Traveller* we find that numbers are more consistent with the feel we're looking for, so the Ladder words aren't all that useful. Here it is anyway because sometimes we slip and refer to a Ladder term instead of just the degree of success as a number.

| | |
|----|-----------|
| +8 | Legendary |
| +7 | Epic |
| +6 | Fantastic |
| +5 | Superb |
| +4 | Great |
| +3 | Good |
| +2 | Decent |
| +1 | Average |
| +0 | Mediocre |
| -1 | Poor |
| -2 | Terrible |

Resolution

So you want to do something. There are a couple of possible kinds of tasks you might run into:

Fixed Difficulty: Therefore sets a difficulty level and tells you what skill you need to use. You throw your fudge dice, add them to your skill and if it's equal to or greater than the difficulty, you succeed. If you fail, you can spend a fate point and invoke an Aspect for +2 or a re-roll. If you still fail you can try to bring in another Aspect. And so on.

Example: throwing a stone at a jar. Difficulty is the range to the jar (I just made that up—as a referee so should you) and the skill is Dexterity. So, a jar 3 zones away is difficulty 3. Lawrence, with Dexterity-2, rolls —for -1. His total is 1, which is not enough to hit the jar.

Opposed Roll: You want to beat someone else at something. They roll defensively and you need to meet or beat that roll offensively. Use fate points as before to increase your result. Your opponent may well do the same—a fate point bidding war is not undesirable.

Example: shooting someone in the face. Difficulty is their Dexterity + their fudge dice sum. You roll your fudge dice and add them to your Firearms skill. Lawrence, now armed with a pistol and having Firearms-4, shoots unfortunate customs officer David, who has Dexterity-1. Lawrence rolls  for -2, which is a total of 2. David rolls , giving him +2 for a total of 3. Lawrence fails again as David dodges his bullet.

The degree to which you beat your target value is your **shift**. Shift might be used for something or it might not. In combat, for example, shift determines the amount of damage done. If you exceed your opponent

Rolling Two Skills

Some checks will call for two skills. There are three different ways they combine.

A is limited by B: roll against the lower of A and B.

A is amplified by B: roll against A, gaining +1 if B is higher than A.

A is modified by B: roll against A, gaining +1 if B is higher than A and -1 if B is lower than A.

when you make a *defensive* roll, you don't get shifts. Instead, for every three you exceed by you generate **spin**. Spin can be used by you or an ally to gain +1 on a roll—basically your defensive maneuver put your opponent at a disadvantage or one of your allies at an advantage somehow. You need to use up spin by the time the turn comes back to whoever generated it—he's the last person that can take advantage. It can be handy to throw some kind of token on the table to indicate spin and let anyone pick it up—index cards with the generator's name on it greatly aid remembering when it expires.

The Time Track

Instant
A few moments
Half a minute
A minute
A few minutes
15 minutes
Half an hour
An hour
A few hours
An afternoon
A day
A few days
A week
A few weeks
A month
A few months
A season
Half a year
A year
A few years
A decade
A lifetime

Dealing with Time

When a skill check should take some amount of time, it might be useful to have the success (and maybe also failure) affect the time it takes to complete. Well the *FATE* system has a way: the Time Track (at left).

For a check where the result is always success but over an amount of time determined by the result, the referee should set the difficulty and the base time to resolve (picked from the Time Track). Shifts generated each move up the track one line. Negative shifts move down the track one line.

Some tasks might fail altogether but go faster with successes. Same process, but negative shifts result in complete failure.

Taking Your Time

You make a roll for a test you have all the time in the world for and blow the roll. That sucks. If you had all the time in the world, surely you could have succeeded? Well, at the referee's discretion, sure!

Here's how it works: find how long the task should have taken on the Time Track. Now, move down the list one line for every bonus you need in order to a succeed, to a maximum of +4. You succeed, and that's how long it takes. Blow a 15-minute task by 3? It takes a few hours.

Physical Bits

The *FATE* system generates a few transient "points" during play that are handily managed with physical tokens. Because they are generally refreshed at the beginning of a session and may be exchanged between players, keeping a running total on paper isn't nearly as effective as moving dinguses around the table. Our preference is a set of nice solid and heavy poker chips in several colours, but you can use anything: coins, glass beads, cowrie shells, and so forth.

We represent character fate points with one colour of chip and exchange them as needed. They are stacked on the character sheet ready for play.

We use another colour chip to represent ship fate points because they come into play under different circumstances and they are not interchangeable with character fate points. They are stacked on the ship's reference card.

Finally we use a third colour chip to represent "spin". Because spin is associated with one player and must be used inside one round, when it's generated we put a spin token in front of that player. When play returns to him, if the spin token is still there he must use it this turn or lose it.

Characters

The general principles of character generation from *Spirit of the Century* are maintained, with the following tweaks to capture the spirit of *Classic Traveller*. The skills to choose from are drawn from *Traveller* except where mechanism demands otherwise.

Two significant changes depart from both games. First, rather than create a list of stunts or to refer to the existing *Spirit of the Century* stunt list, we have tried to find the underlying structure of the *FATE* stunt concept. Players are free to create their own stunts using the provided rules for what constitutes a stunt.

Second, reconciling *Traveller's* lethality with *Spirit of the Century's* over-the-top adventurous pulp feel, the stress tracks have been reduced in size and a third track added to manage failed attempts to buy expensive things. Or rather, not failed attempts—a character tries to buy something and he gets it—but the crippling debt that ensues and the weight that it bears upon the character is modeled, affecting even his capacity to fight. Yes, we are going to model worry as an adverse combat effect.

Aspects

Aspects are built in five phases, with two Aspects gained per phase, pretty much exactly as one creates a character in *Spirit of the Century*. For each phase the player should concoct a short paragraph about the phase topic and that

Services

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Navy | Marines |
| Army | Scouts |
| Merchants | Pirates |
| Diplomats | Rogue |
| Bureaucrat | Hunter |
| Barbarian | Noble |
| Scientist | Belter |

paragraph should imply the two aspects gained in the phase. Some phases are collaborative.

Phase 1 establishes “Homeworld and Family”—life up to age 18, or thereabouts. Aspects might include features of the home world like its technology level or political structure if these impact the character.

Phase 2 establishes “Enlistment” in a service. We used broad strokes—Book 1 and Supplement 4 careers—but augmented with details for flavour. Certainly there is ample opportunity to invent anything appropriate for your character concept. This phase describes your intended career path, and might include college, the draft, etc.

Phase 3 is an important event for you during your “Service.” It will involve the player on your right.

Phase 4 is your chance to present your version of the event described by the person on your left—your view on those events, and how they impacted you (“Cross-training”). Characters in the group know one another, but not necessarily well, and personal perspectives change the understanding of events. So—phase 3 gives the cue for someone else’s phase 4, and your phase 4 is drawing on another player’s phase 3.

Phase 5 is “Mustering Out”—how you left your service, and (perhaps) what happened afterwards.

EXAMPLE: EION YEARDLEY

Phase 1: Homeworld and family

Home World : Khelkevarian Moon

Eion was born during the occupation and war on the moon of Khelkevaria. He grew up in the height of the war, becoming a child militant. It was kill or be killed and there was nowhere safe. Nonetheless, Eion stayed—and fought—until the alien enemy left the moon. He finally left Khelkevaria when he was 18.

1. I can do that.
2. Just keep shooting!

Phase 2: Enlistement

Eion managed to leave Khelkevaria on a supply merchant ship and ended up on an Imperial core world. Being mostly uneducated and needing a job, he found the Marine Corps. Eion fit in as this was his life since birth. Eion quickly rose through the ranks and showed his aptitude for the service, eventually becoming a squad leader.

3. Heavy weapons make the day.
4. My boys.



Phase 3: Service

The mission came over the wire—"recover" a Marine mission gone wrong in some backwater. 10,000 marines were already lost in a misjump, and when the Imperial Navy found the wreckage the low berth escape pods had been deployed to some unknown world. The locals were going to get an eye opening. Rules of engagement: get in, get out, and leave no evidence. Including witnesses. The landing was fine, but when the decision came to "remove" one local, Endicott Farsight [player to the right], instead of killing him, Eion loaded him into one of the low berths and shipped him to Imperial space. Witness removed!

5. Just following orders.
6. Why kill the innocent?

Phase 4: Cross-training

Sent to a backwater world to hand-hold some diplomat [player to the left], Eion finds he has a gift for combat even if it's all with his mouth. "I don't know who that pissant was but it sure cost me with the brass."

7. Damned backward worlds.
8. Screw politics.

Phase 5: Mustering out

"Leave the service? I'm not leaving without a fight!" They tried. Eion was busted to every messy job — or was it him that made it messy? They promoted him all the way to an officer and sat him behind a desk. He left the service at the first opportunity for a paid fight. "I didn't even bother to tell them that I was gone."

9. I am NOT a leader.
10. Let's get going.

Aspects: Take One

A good aspect gives the player opportunities to excel and therefore opportunities to complicate things. It is evocative enough to come in handy in unexpected circumstances and yet not so vague as to always apply.

"Crack shot" is okay.

"Born with a gun in my hand" is great.

"I can hit anything with my rifle, and probably will" writes its own games.

Skills

The *Traveller* skill system has many strengths, but *Spirit of the Century* contains a degree of abstraction that needs to be represented. The following list of skills address both needs as well as can be managed, retaining the feel of the *Traveller* skill set and the capacity of the *Spirit of the Century* set to solve most problems with a little creative narration. Players select 15 skills for their character and rank them in the "pyramid": one at level 5, two at 4, three at 3, four at 2, and five at 1. (This allows characters to maintain the appearance of the *Classic Traveller* skills system—"I have Pilot-4"—but if people prefer to use the *Spirit of the Century* terms according to the Ladder, that's fine too; Pilot-4 corresponds to "Great Piloting".) Selected skills should be logically consistent with the character's background material as elaborated in the Aspects phases but there are no hard and fast rules for selection.

Not all the *Classic Traveller* skills are represented here; some obvious missing ones are detailed below in Stunts. There may very well be character concepts

that need new skills, which can be allowed with referee permission (e.g. a player wants the character to be a lawyer. He wants Legal-5 and feels that Military-grade Admin (or Military-grade Forgery, for corporate law) just won't cut it. Fine: he has Legal-5).

CHARACTERISTICS

Strength: allows the characters to shift heavy objects, break things with their bare hands, and otherwise use their muscles to solve problems. You would use your Strength skill to arm wrestle (opposed Strength checks) or roll a wrecked car back over onto its wheels.

Dexterity: measures the character's ability to move and react — dodging, running, and even fine motor skills like sleight of hand would fall under this skill. You would use your Dexterity skill in combat to run (see Combat) or to dodge attacks (opposing your attacker's attack roll).

Endurance: allows a character to perform physical actions for much longer than others. You would use your Endurance to endure torture (opposing your interrogator's roll) or to win a marathon race. Endurance determines the size of a character's Health track.

Whither Intelligence?

Intelligence and Education are subsumed into Aspects and the new skill, Science; Social Standing has been removed, though some of its features can be achieved with Intimidation and Oratory, while others would be defined by an Aspect; Noble blood is not a skill, but a characteristic determined by Aspects; Credits is the equivalent of Resources in Spirit of the Century, and replaces the need to measure cash resources; Pilot subsumes Ship's Boat; Navigation is the test skill for operating Jump drives; Zero-G includes both Zero-G Combat, the use of recoilless weapons, plus non-combat Zero-G activities; Survival subsumes Hunting; Broker subsumes Trader; Art works like it does in Spirit of the Century; Science is a complimentary skill—knowledge of physical and chemical laws of the universe—that in Classic Traveller are subsumed entirely within the stats of Intelligence and Education.

Resolve: determines just how cool a customer the character is and how determined. Make a Resolve check to defend against composure attacks ("I shoot a whole mag of ammo at his feet!") or to brazen your way through customs. Resolve determines the size a character's Composure track.

Credits: measures your cash and your ability to marshal fiscal resources (loans, favours, and so on). You make a Credits check against the cost of a piece of equipment to determine what the consequences are of acquiring it. Credits determines the size of a character's Wealth track.

Alertness: measures how aware of his surroundings the character is, and how sharp his senses are. Opposed Alertness checks can determine surprise before combat or a static test to discover a hidden object.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Admin: someone has to shuffle all that paperwork and Admin is how they do it. You might check Admin to speed up an application or to find out who's in charge. Opposed Admin checks might resolve

two bureaucrats trying to effect different policies in a big organization.

Streetwise: characters with Streetwise know the back alleys and sidestreets. They know where to get illegal or otherwise shady goods and they know people who are not always good to know. It doesn't matter whether a streetwise person has been here before, because the streets are the same everywhere. Make a Streetwise check to buy guns on a high law level world or to find a safe place to stay when the port authority arrives.

Carousing: this character knows how to make friends. It might be at parties or just while sharing space on a long space flight, but in short order he gets to know people and they like him. Make a Carousing check to pump marines on leave for information in the starport bar.

Tactics: is the ability of the character to command others in combat—people reflexively do as they are told when commanded well. Make a Tactics roll to Declare the position of enemy units or to place favourable Aspects on terrain or followers.

Oratory: is the weapon of great speakers. When trying to whip up a crowd to revolt or make your points to a jury, Oratory is what you want. Make opposed Oratory checks to determine the outcome of a debate! Oratory should also cover commanding troops, perhaps enhanced with a Military-grade stunt!

Intimidation: sometimes making people do what you want is best accomplished through threats, either physical or something more subtle. Make an Intimidation check opposed by Resolve to bluster your way past guards under the premise of being powerful and on official business!

SPACE SKILLS

Pilot: this is the basic skill for moving things through space. From a small shuttle to an Imperial Dreadnaught, every ship with a maneuver engine needs a pilot, and in combat, you need a good one!

Navigation: this is the skill for taking a ship faster-than-light. Operating a jump drive requires a combination of applied gravitics, particle physics, and raw in-

Aspects: Take Two

The selection of a character's aspects an essential part of character generation. Aspects are the catalysts for the economies of fate points. They need to be worded in a way that you can invoke them on yourself (for when a bonus to a roll is needed), but—more importantly—they need to invite compels from thereferee. Otherwise you lose your fate points too quickly and there is no obvious source for replenishment. A well-worded Aspect can be both revealing of the character's nature, and be obviously invocable for both benefit and detriment.

Not all aspects can work that way, and it may emerge in play that some aspects do not enter into the fate point economy at all. They are the ones which can be traded out through the experience process.

Aspects reveal something about the character that the character may not even be aware of. Similarly, an Aspect might be a physical object (an heirloom weapon, or a spaceship). In making that choice, the player is telling thereferee that this object is part of the character identity. It won't be taken away, but it will also confer obligations and responsibilities, so that it too is an active part of the economy.

stinct. Navigation is also the skill used in understanding a star system's layout, and its gravitational influences in particular.

Engineering: starship engines are tetchy things, and require constant monitoring and repair. This is the job of the engineer.

Gunnery: firing turrets (lasers, sandcasters, or missiles), singly or in batteries, requires a gunner.

Vacc Suit

The spelling "vacc suit" has been deliberately retained from first editions as we believe it is an essential part of Traveller. Fixing the spelling is a sure sign that a version has gone down the Dark Path.

Vacc Suit: when there's a millimeter-thin barrier separating you from the depths of space, you want to know how to operate and repair a vacc suit. This skill covers operation, maintenance, and repair of a pressurized suit, as well as movement while wearing a suit in space and in hostile environments.

Zero-G: moving without gravity is something learned with practice over time. This skill allows you to move (and, more importantly, fight!) in low (or no!) gravity without penalties. It also includes a basic knowledge of recoilless weaponry.

Prospecting: making a living out of what you find in space is not easy, but hardy prospectors do survive somehow. Space, as is well known, is big. But the ability to turn its resources into a fast credit is not a skill to be ignored.

Survey: the basic skill for many scouts, this is the ability to identify and measure the parameters of a system or a world in a meaningful way, to facilitate navigation and trade.

WORKING THINGS

Mechanical: things break. You fix them. At higher levels, this skill also corresponds to the skills of a mechanical or civil engineer.

Electronics: electrical systems are everywhere. This skill keeps them running. Whether it's a security system, or power to a ship's running lights, you know how to maintain and repair them. At higher levels, this skill also corresponds to the skills of an electronic engineer.

Gravitics: on high-tech planets, grav cars (and grav belts) are the standard means of transport. This skill concerns the science of manipulating gravitons—flying and repairing grav vehicles of all kinds, but also maintaining the grav plates in starships.

Computer: while any fool can operate a handcomp, this skill allows you to use, program, and hack larger systems, including starship computers.

Communications: you're thinking Uhura operating her switchboard, right? Wrong. Commo is an essential skill for coordinating detailed combat strikes, for cryptography, and for defending ships from electronic warfare.

Ground Vehicle: you can drive and perform basic maintenance on any civilian

wheeled or tracked vehicle.

Air Vehicle: you can fly and perform basic maintenance on a fixed-wing aircraft, a dirigible, or a helicopter.

Water Vehicle: you can pilot and perform basic maintenance on water vehicles and submersibles.

Equestrian: you can ride and train living creatures with physiognomies capable of carrying you. This is a skill usually only developed by scouts, barbarians, or nobility.

COMBAT SKILLS

Blade Weapons: whether you are trained in fencing, advanced hoplite maneuvers, or you like to swing a claymore, this is the skill you use in melee combat.

Firearms: hurling lead at people really quickly is still one of the most efficient means of killing them, even in the far future. This skill covers the use of all civilian projectile weapons.

Energy Weapons: this lets you shoot and maintain hand-held laser weapons.

Brawling: not all fights are pretty. Those that aren't—using clubs, chairs—or occasional switchblades, use the Brawling skill.

OTHER SKILLS

Recon: the ability to assess terrain and understand its impact on human movement has many uses: for gaining an advantage in a land combat situation, recon might be used to add a favorable aspect to the terrain.

Demolitions: represents the understanding and use of explosives for mining, avalanche control, and other perfectly reasonable activities that are not going to arouse suspicion in anyone. Really.

Gambling: the art of extracting funds from others, while they think they are playing a game.

Medicine: the basic skill of the medical profession, this skill focuses on maintaining and stabilizing the health of other individuals of your species. Xeno-Medicine: dealing with species other than your own implies an automatic -2 on all medical rolls.

Survival: the ability to keep yourself alive in hostile environments, including the ability to avoid being detected in wilderness surroundings if one so wishes (camouflage can be represented with opposed Alertness vs. Survival rolls). Survival includes hunting skills, whether for sustenance or sport—or both.

Broker: this skill involves understanding the market pressures of interstellar commerce, and the ability to predict and manipulate them for personal profit. Buying and selling starship cargoes can often lead to opposed rolls between brokers looking to acquire “spin” for their credit checks.

Arts: whether it's a knowledge of literature, fine art, acting, or philosophy, this skill defines your ability to express yourself creatively, or to analyze those who do.

Science: this skill represents a knowledge of the natural sciences—biology, chemistry, physics, archaeology, and on like that. It allows educated inferences about the nature of things in the worlds.

Character Building

These skills represent a wide variety of activities that may prove useful in the course of a game. But it may be that you want to individuate your character, to develop her into something more than a skill-pyramid. One way to do this is through the choice of aspects. Two doctors might have Medical-3, but the one with the aspect “my sutures don't come undone” trained as a combat medic, and has patched hundreds of wounded marines together in his career, while the one with the “the Duke's personal anesthetist” might have a more traditional, and more privileged, medical training. The former could invoke his aspect to help a comrade during combat, while the latter might invoke his aspect when looking for drugs in a port infirmary. Someone with Blade Weapons-2 might still prove himself a formidable melee opponent when using “My Father's Spear.” A sculptor might only have Arts-2, but “I make the plaster breathe” could (with a few lucky rolls) justify a subsector-wide reputation within a particular *métier*.

Note that there is a secret effect here that is actually the reverse of what many role-playing game veterans may be used to. We are not going to determine, for example, how old the character is and then inflict the ravages of age upon her. Instead the player chooses the skills and can interpret them as an appropriate age. Got Strength-1 and Endurance-1? Maybe you're old. Endurance-5? Probably a young one. Or an older person who maintains a vigorous exercise regime. You decide who your character is. The pyramid holds you in check—your job is to tell the story it whispers in your ear.

EXAMPLE: EION YEARDLEY

Eion, our ex-marine from the Aspects chapter, has the following skill pyramid:

Firearms-5

Demolitions-4, Alertness-4

Zero-G-3, Brawling-3, Strength-3

Vacc Suit-2, Admin-2, Endurance-2, Recon-2

Survival-1, Tactics-1, Dexterity-1, Ground Vehicle-1, Commo-1

Unskilled Checks

The Far Future is a period of specialization; while every character is assumed to have Characteristics (Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Resolve, Credits, and Alertness) at level 0, all other skills begin at level (-1), *i.e.* a two-dice gap from the level of initial training.

Stunts

We've tried to streamline the stunt-selection process considerably. It's assumed that you start with whatever stuff you want/can carry—weapons with which you are trained, etc. Each character selects three stunts. There are several types of stunts available and many variations possible within each.

TRAVELLER'S AID SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

A hotel in every respectable port, a single passage a month; TAS membership is worth a lot to a prospective Traveller, but is only available to players as a stunt.

AN IMPORTANT THING

This will often be a starship but could be anything. Details to be agreed upon with thereferee, but a player may generally select any ship that is service-appropriate and/or narrative-appropriate for the character. It might also be a corporation, a noble manor, or any major possession that might at once offer advantage and responsibility. Important Things should run a constant risk to your Wealth or your Composure. Later you will find that owning a starship as a stunt has plenty of game mechanisms for making your life difficult. Any non-starship Important Thing should be at least as interesting.

MILITARY-GRADE

Players may apply this to any single skill in which they are trained. In some cases, the changes map onto skills not otherwise available. Military-grade firearms allow characters to fire strictly military weapons like ACRs and Gauss Rifles. Military-grade Gunnery allows the character to fire ship's particle accelerators, plasma cannons, meson guns, and spinal mounts—weapons only found on military vessels. Military-grade Vacc Suit would be a Battle Dress skill.

If the player can provide a narrative justifying the connection, any skill may be upgraded in this way (military-grade credits might be desirable for an illegal arms dealer, allowing ongoing access to restricted items); some skills will not naturally lend themselves to such upgrading.

A typical military character is going to have at least one of these and may well use up all three stunt slots with them. Military-grade Firearms or Military-grade Energy Weapons will certainly be typical of the modern infantryman as civilian weapons are not nearly effective enough for warfare. Armed forces from very high technologies will also likely have Military-grade Vacc Suit as this enables the use of powered armour.

We note with some glee that this means that military characters are unlikely to wind up with a starship or a TAS membership, precisely as in the original game.

SKILL REPLACEMENT

A large number of stunts in *Spirit of the Century* allow you to use one skill in the place where another is appropriate. Any such substitution can be made, with an appropriate narrative explaining the connection and a good title.

If the skill being swapped in is at level 3 or below, it costs one stunt. If it is at level 4 or 5, it costs two.

Example. A character has Admin-5 (her apex skill) and wants the stunt “Red Tape” allowing her to use Admin for Forgery (narrative: the character can bamboozle others with false claims of bureaucratic morass). It would cost two stunts to be able to use Forgery at level 5; the character sheet would record “Red Tape (twice)”; the player could, however, pay only one stunt and have an effective Forgery-3 using her Admin-5 skill.

If someone takes the stunt twice for a substituted skill at level-3 or lower, the effect is to make the replaced skill at the substituted skill level +1.

Example: Admin-3 and “Red Tape (twice)” would give the character an effective forgery-4.

This is most likely to come into play if a character’s top skills are downgraded through character development.

TAGGABLE SKILLS

Players may designate one of their rank three or higher skills as “taggable” by another player, for a bonus of +2 at the usual cost of a fate point. There must be a condition attached to the stunt. This character’s skill now also acts as an Aspect, but for everyone else!

ROLL DOWN NOT UP

The player may designate a particular stress track (Health, Composure, or Wealth) and specify that any hits on already crossed out boxes for that track will roll down instead of up. This stunt pays off best for tracks that already have bonus boxes from “Extra Stress” (see ahead) or a high skill associated with the track.

EXTRA STRESS BOX

The player may add one box to any of his stress tracks (Health, Composure, or Wealth) permanently. This stunt pays off best to increase a minimum size track where the “Roll Down Not Up” stunt doesn’t help nearly as much.

Stunt Examples

Here is a list of example stunts. This list should not be considered exhaustive but rather as examples from which players can select, elaborate, or use as inspiration.

SKILL REPLACEMENT STUNTS

Hacker: apply Computer for Credits.

Knows the Market: apply Broker for Credits.

Liaison: use Admin for Streetwise, or Streetwise for Admin (player's choice).

Natural swordsman: use Dexterity for Blade weapons.

Rope-a-Dope: use Endurance for Brawling.

Red Tape: Admin for Forgery.

Sucker born every minute: use Gambling for Credits.

Ship's tactics: use Navigation for Gunnery.

TAGGABLE SKILL STUNTS

Cover me: others may tag my Firearms as a bonus to a defensive roll against enemy gunfire or to a movement (Dexterity) roll while under fire.

Fleet tactics: others may tag my Leader as a bonus in Gunnery when there is more than one ship on either side of a space combat.

MILITARY-GRADE STUNTS

Military-grade Alertness: a successful Alertness check before combat allows you to position enemy or friendly units to your advantage. This may allow you to simulate an ambush, a counter-ambush, or an escape that might otherwise be impossible.

Military-grade Credits: allows you to purchase normally unavailable or illegal weaponry.

Military-grade Carousing: you suffer no ill-effects from a night's drinking and, however much fun it looks like you're having, you never suffer adverse effects from recreational drink or drugs in combat.

Military-grade Broker: when conducting deals relating to military equipment, you never suffer adverse modifiers when they are illegal to buy, sell, or both. Normally brokering such goods in an illegal environment would substantially reduce your profits by increasing the sale difficulty. You know all the right paperwork to apply and all the right names to drop, not to mention legal avenues of sale for restricted equipment.

Military-grade Commo: required for initiating electronic warfare. While any ship's computer may defend against ECM, when controlled by someone with military-grade commo, a ship's computer can hack, initiating electronic warfare (and, possible, be hacked in return).

Military-grade Pilot: when maneuvering in combat, your pilot roll is modified by the ship's maneuver rating rather than limited by it.

Military-grade Engineer: successful repair checks in combat clear the highest hull integrity damage box regardless of the degree of success.

Military-grade Computer: successful repair checks in combat clear the highest data integrity damage box regardless of the degree of success.

STUNTS CHARACTER EXAMPLE: EION YEARDLEY

Our favourite marine, Eion, has the following stunts:

Military-grade Firearms: can use ACRs, Gauss rifles, and heavy projectile weapons.

Military-grade Vacc Suit: can use powered combat armour and is familiar with all pressurised armour variants and their repair.

Taggable Firearms (I got your back!): Any character performing an activity under enemy fire can tag Eion's Firearms skill as an Aspect to aid their roll.

Fate Points

Players are each awarded five fate points at the beginning of a session. This is substantially less than players receive in *Spirit of the Century* (though vastly more than in classic *Traveller*) but hear us out before you lynch us: we find that the usage of fate points is not evenly distributed across a session and that this can create some awkward situations. If a session goes entirely without combat, for example, which is something that is fairly likely in a *Traveller* game, ten fate points is an awful lot. It can skew results of the session inappropriately as players use their excess of fate points to succeed at everything they do.

In combat, however, the rate at which the dice hit the table is vastly increased and consequently the fate points get used up that much faster. By the end of a fight characters can be literally dying for a few fate points which can get inappropriately comical as every Aspect is mined for disadvantage in order to get paid.

From the SRD

Players usually regain fate points between sessions when a refresh occurs. If thereferee left things at a cliffhanger, she is entitled to say that no refresh has occurred between sessions. By the same token, if thereferee feels that a substantial (i.e., dramatically appropriate) amount of downtime and rest occurs in play, thereferee may allow a refresh to occur mid-session.

The amount of fate points a player gets at a refresh is called his refresh rate and it is usually equal to the number of aspects the player has. When a refresh occurs, players bring their number of fate points up to their refresh rate. If they have more, their total does not change.

To mitigate this we award five fate points at the beginning of a session and five more at the beginning of the first (and only the first) combat scene of a session.

You use your fate points the same way as you would in *Spirit of the Century*:

For one fate point you can invoke an Aspect to get +2 on a roll. You better back up the choice of Aspect with some narration though—you need to sell thereferee on your Aspect being

worth something in the circumstance. Which Aspect though? Well, if it's one of your character's Aspects it's called an invoke. If it's an enemy's Aspect or a scene Aspect, it's called tagging. Same thing, though—narrate, wait for thereferee's nod, pay your fate point, take your +2. Do this before or after the dice hit the table.

For one fate point you can invoke an Aspect to re-roll. Sometimes that's a much bigger potential pay-off than just getting the +2. As above, you need to narrate it and therefore has to buy what you're selling.

For one fate point you can invoke an Aspect (or tag an appropriate one on the setting or an enemy) to make a skill substitution. For example, let's say the Aspect "Really Dark" is on the environment—you might try tagging that to use your Stealth skill for a Weapons attack! Ninja assault! This is your attack action.

Players get fate points back when thereferee chooses to *compel* their characters' Aspects against them. In regular play the effect of the compel is entirely at the discretion of thereferee, but when playing with the Optional Rule: Zero-Sum Fate there are very specific effects that can be demanded. The procedure is simple: thereferee offers a fate point to the player and announces the Aspect that is going to be a problem here. It is up to the player to agree to it, in which case he gets the fate point and narrates how his Aspect has complicated the scene. If he wants to deny the compel, he pays a fate point to thereferee and goes on his way. Players should feel free to bring up their compellable Aspects but they can't force the fate point offer.

The fate point refresh rate in *Spirit of the Far Future* is 5 rather than the 10 recommended in the SRD, with an additional 5 refreshing in combat.

Stress Tracks

Spirit of the Far Future uses three stress tracks instead of the usual two in order to capture the occasional financial desperation that is part of the *Traveller* setting. To this end characters have a Health track, a Composure track, and a Wealth track.

Health has a base of three boxes. It is modified by Endurance exactly as described in *Spirit of the Century*: an Endurance of 1 or 2 increases the Health track by one, an Endurance of 3 or 4 increases the Health track by two, and an Endurance of 5 increases the Health track by three.

Composure has a base of three boxes and is modified by Resolve exactly as described in *Spirit of the Century*: a Resolve of 1 or 2 increases the Composure track by one, a Resolve of 3 or 4 increases the Composure track by two, and a Resolve of 5 increases the Composure track by three.

Wealth has a base of three boxes and is modified by Credits in the same way the other tracks are modified by their defining skill: a Credits skill of 1 or 2 increases the Wealth track by one, a skill of 3 or 4 increases the Wealth track by two, and a skill of 5 increases the Wealth track by three. The Wealth track takes hits whenever credit checks fail and generates consequences just like any other track. These consequences should be eagerly compelled by the referee to bring bounty hunters into play, deny access to facilities, stir up trouble with the local law, and generally make life miserable.

The maximum number of consequences a character can sustain is still three, regardless of the track from which the consequence was sustained.

In *Spirit of the Century*, stress tracks are cleared after every stressful situation. Not so in the far future: stress is not so easy to get rid of. Instead, each day spent

avoiding the relevant form of stress clears a number of boxes equal to the Skill that augments it, though at least 1. Thus a character with Endurance-4 clears four Health stress boxes per day. A character with no Credits stat clears one Wealth stress box per day.

Non-human Races

In order to create a non-human race, start by deciding what's really different, in game mechanical terms, between them and the total range of abilities to be found among humans. Designing a balanced race really means not going beyond these parameters, which, in the largely abstract system presented here, allows for a seven-point range between -1 (unskilled) and 5. Wording of aspects can increase this range (both for humans and for the aliens) by and additional +/- 2 (creating a modified eleven-point range, -3 to 7).

Non-human races are best modelled by augmenting the existing rules as subtly as possible—that is, the best aliens for the purposes of *Traveller* are going to be those with few game mechanical differences no matter how bizarre the story behind them might be: you might introduce a new skill that represents some feature specific to these aliens and maybe even require that all members of the species have it, but we recommend resisting structural changes to how a character is created. (The Psionics rules function the same way: they introduce new skills, but require a specific cost in terms of stunts, aspects, and fate points so that the economy created by game play is not disproportionately affected).

Formulating a non-human race (or converting one from an existing ruleset) may then be framed in terms of general statements that are applicable when measured against a normal human. They may suggest some skills should be higher than others, or that some should be lower, and stunts that would be more common in the race than in humans. These differences form the mechanical description of the race. These differences do not change the number of stunts or skills or the shape of the skill pyramid; they only describe certain features of the choices one would make within those constraints in order to create a believable alien of that type.

The parameters for creating members of other races lie completely with the discretion of the player, subject to referee approval of course. What follows are short descriptions of selected Traveller races that are particularly appropriate for PCs, and guidelines for skill and aspect choices that would be appropriate for such characters. All choice, of course, remains with the player, as there are always exceptions to any general rule.

VARGR

The Vargr are a race of elevated, bipedal canids. Vargr characters are not usually very strong but move with grace, and their senses are acute.

Within Vargr space, Vargr are found in all professions, including Navy, Military, Merchant, and usual civilian careers. In the Imperium, though, there is higher than average representation of three Vargr career paths: Corsairs, professional pirates and/or mercenaries found on the fringes of Imperial space; Emissaries to

subsector capitals, and Loners, who, free of the pack mentality, operate as prospectors, or, more often, criminals.

Race-specific skills (optional): Vargr have a Charisma skill valued between 0 and 5 (it is considered a characteristic, so the default is 0), which measures their relative rank in pack situations. It can be used for Composure attacks (or defense) in combat situations against other Vargr, and as a social skill to motivate other Vargr. Loners are typically found in the Imperium because their Charisma value is not high. Humans are always considered “untrained” in Charisma (-1) and may not initiate attacks. In exceptional cases, however, some humans have learned how to rise among a Vargr pack and gain Charisma.

Character Development: Vargr are found throughout Imperial space, as citizens or visitors, in a variety of professions. While they are less massive than humans, and sometimes tire easily, the variation is sufficient that there are no restrictions or even tendencies in skill selection that need to be considered. While many know firearms and brawl, they are not particularly more effective at either of these than humans, and the reputation for criminal disorder is concentrated in a noticeable unruly few. Most Vargr would have at least one rank in Dexterity, and at least two ranks in Alertness. Most Imperials would expect Vargr to have ranks in Brawling, Firearms, and Streetwise.

BWAP

Bwaps or Wabs (Bawapakerwa-a-a-awapawab) appear as bipedal salamanders or newts, slightly smaller than humans. While not technologically sophisticated, they are master bureaucrats and administrators.

Character Development: Because of their philosophy, Bwaps tend not to enlist in combat careers; they are never Marines. It would be very unusual for any Bwap to have skill ranks in Strength, Streetwise, Forgery; it would be very unusual for any Bwap not to have at least two ranks in Admin. Typical aspects (particularly from the first phase of character generation) emphasize the need to maintain humidity.

Example Characters

It is possible to create characters that map very closely onto *Traveller* generated characters. Players should feel free, however, to explore the boundaries of the system as it offers a great deal more than *Traveller* did if that's where you want to go. Certainly now characters with backgrounds as Nobles or Scientists are just as playable as any other character by virtue of the skill pyramid, which is the same for all player characters.

The following three characters were generated by the authors in the course of developing *Spirit of the Far Future*: one in the Navy, one in the Scouts, one in the Merchants.

There are no formal character sheets required: information can be presented differently on the page, but this is all the basic information one needs during play. How did these characters evolve? In the first part of the character generation process, no one had any idea of who they were (going to be) or what they were doing. Different players present different emphases, and different degrees of detail.

Nonetheless, we present these characters here on our own character sheets from Book 3.

PHASE 1: HOMEWORLD AND FAMILY

GARREN: Born in an asteroid belt means not learning to fall. For Garren Mandau, the life aboard thousand-ton mining ships, working with his parents, was devoid of much hope. It was a life you were born into. . . a dead-end system, mining dead-end ore for somewhere else. Always somewhere else. But Garren had potential, and he was going up. I know, because that used to be me.

Aspects: Every way is up, I know lost causes.

LAM: Son of an itinerant farmer on a low tech feudal world at the fringes and enthralled with the dashing Imperial Scouts that visit town from the scout base there.

Aspects: Works with his hands, Starry eyed.

AKI: Born to a well-to-do family on the Nippon Tradition-centric world of Neo Okinawa nothing was held back from this petite Asian girl except freedom. Her family exports silk and other high-end textiles throughout the Imperium.

Aspects: Honour Bound, Taste for finery.

PHASE 2: ENLISTMENT

GARREN: The Imperial Navy, of course, is looking for hopefuls, and someone like Garren—comfortable in zero-g, from a system that hasn't provided a recruit in years, and who is willing to do risky things in exchange for an officer's commission—was exactly what the PR office in the subsector capital thought would allow for a minor celebration of meeting quotas. But now he was moving—on the ships, working in the Line, and standing on a bridge. This is where he belongs.

Aspects: Officer material, Who needs a horizon?

LAM: Lam ran away from the drudgery of farm life to join the Imperial Scout Service only to discover that technology is not so glamorous when you're delivering mail.

Aspects: Space travel is boring, Explorer at heart.

AKI: Things didn't work out for Aki as she'd planned. Enrolled into the Merchants and forced behind a desk shifting documents for a mega-corporation due to her family pulling some strings. They wanted her safe and the family's products pushed throughout the Imperium. Shifting documentation filled her family's coffers but not Aki's desires and needs. The tedium of monotony weighed heavily upon her until she found herself chaffing for something, anything, to happen.

Aspects: Proficient yet bored, Cuts through the red tape

PHASE 3: SERVICE

(In this phase, the narrative involves the person on each player's left)

GARREN: Small wars break out, as they do, when Imperial interests are ignored. That's what I'm for: my ship and its crew ensure the mail gets through. And right there you have the whole foundation of the Imperium, don't you? We protect space, so that those on the ground can floss their teeth. So few actually travel. But when a scout like Lam comes along—actually pushing the frontiers of the Imperium, adding to the worlds that now need to be guarded. . . Well that's

someone I notice; someone I can use. But Lam and Garren see eye to eye. I can impose the order, and the scouts can ensure that the citizens remain comfortable on their planets.

Aspects: A bigger Imperium is a better Imperium, The Navy is not enough

LAM: Lam becomes involved with the mail service for a multi-system corporation and winds up narrowly escaping conviction on charges relating to a stock swindle engineered by Aki Murashibo. Both wind up rich and with reputations (locally) destroyed.

Aspects: With great responsibility comes great opportunity, A lot can be changed with a week in jump space.

AKI: A routine visit goes awry and Aki finds herself at odds with the Vargr. Held against her will, it takes a daring rescue mission from Garren to free her. Then Aki must help unravel all the bureaucratic fallout.

Aspects: Afraid of chaos, Space belongs to humanity.

PHASE 4: CROSS TRAINING

(In this phase, players re-interpret the event involving them introduced in the previous phase by the person on each player's right)

GARREN: Humans get kidnapped all the time, I'm sure. But this human was rich, and she was connected, and, well, I had a ship that could reach her three subsectors deep into Vargr space. The rescue, if that's what it was, began well enough. We found her en route to Lair, and the marines could retrieve her. But then the Vargr Corsairs destroyed a capital ship. My Capital Ship. And it took eight months commandeering small packet vehicles, stowing away, and cheating death to make it back. But we did come back, and now that part of my life is the subject of a series of increasingly fictional tri-vid programmes broadcast across the sector. Being awarded an SEH is one thing. . . but did I even get a thank you?

Aspects: Lost my command, Unwanted fame.

LAM: Lam gets the survey done even in the middle of a local war, but with a million-ton planetoid dreadnaught backing you up, the locals are surprisingly helpful. Science is unbounded as long as the Imperium (and Garren) is backing you up.

Aspects: Science at gunpoint, Powerful friends.

AKI: It proved far too easy. Hoodwinking a Vargr was akin to fleecing a no-techer, only now she had motivation. Bankrupting a world seemed an appropriate repercussion at her harsh treatment at the mongrel dogs' hands. If some others felt the backlash, her family included, so be it. Besides, wrapping that mail runner around her finger simply sharpened her growing abilities.

Aspects: "It's just a world", Shame of my family.

PHASE 5: MUSTERING OUT

GARREN: So a Commodore can be broken with honours and ceremonies. An honourable discharge or a safe assignment doing military publicity and smiling beside actors. I took the discharge. Now I've left that life, and I've left most everything about that man. I'm Tamar Bendigo, and I don't need Garren Mandau. I have a stolen Vargr courier, and I know I can get another if I need it. Who I was is

in the past is gone. I am now, strangely enough, everything my parents expected me to be, forty years ago—just another belter, taking odd jobs here and there. Who doesn't talk about the past.

Aspects: A jump drive and a vacc suit are all that I need, The drugs quiet the voices.

LAM: Rich enough and with a strong reputation for getting the job done, there are only a few areas of space that aren't safe for Lam. He leaves the service with a detached duty contract and a lab ship and steers it into the black.

Aspects: The *ISSV Derrida* (detached service), Never the same star twice.

AKI: Some would call it a dishonourable discharge, Aki considers it her stepping-out party. Expelled from the Merchants and disowned by her family, Aki finds the universe open to her newfound ambitions.

Aspects: Universal Ambitions, Silver tongued and gold lined black sheep.

Going through the five phases took 45-60 minutes, including reading aloud the gradual development of the characters. The next part involves building the skill pyramid, so that they are appropriate for the characters about whom we've now learned quite a lot (with even more in the players' imaginations!). Players also select their three stunts. Some players may prefer to select their stunts before their skills, or at the same time. This process may require some revision of aspects or some redefinition of character direction. For example, it is clear from the narratives developed in phase five that the players for both Garren (now Tamar) and Lam are both thinking of investing one stunt in a ship. If these characters are planning on adventuring together, one of them might want to change their mind. Since Lam has also invested one of his aspects in the ship (a strategy that reinforces his character's connection with the ship), the ship in Garren's narrative may be something in the past (or, if he does invest the stunt, may be a ship that exists but simply does not come into play directly), or that works in conjunction with Lam's lab ship (though that will likely require hiring crew members for the ships—crew members that come with additional plot hook possibilities).

An Aspect and a Stunt?

Notice that Lam Pfao has his starship as an Aspect and as a Stunt? That's deliberate. The Stunt means that Lam has all the effects that a ship brings: he can fly around in it. The Aspect ties it to Lam: that particular ship is part of his identity. The player wants therefore to compel it for complications and intends to invoke it for advantage. You don't need to make your ship both an Aspect and a Stunt, but it does make things more personal.

One approach for new players is to choose an apex skill first—what the character does best. Stunts may follow from that. In the end, for example, Garren's player decided that instead of a ship, he'd further enhance the impact of his character's peak skill, Endurance, by taking "Roll Down Not Up" for his character's Health track: he wants his weathered belter to be tougher than any marine. Compare the choice by Aki's player to have Military-grade Brokering—we don't know what it does yet, but Aki's player sure wants to find out! Characters should decide how they are going to behave in combat (do they have specific skills?), how they would seek employment on a ship, and—even more interesting—what skills they never learned.

Finally, the size of the various hit tracks is calculated. This process, another 20-30 minutes perhaps, yielded the characters at the top of this section.

Characters Emerge

Garren's decision to add drug dependency to the last phase of his character generation (evident only in the final aspect) will probably be a regular source of fate points. That's cool.

Many skill and stunt choices develop out of the narrated backgrounds. For example, Lam's Commo Wizard stunt may be less advantageous than Military Grade Communications (which would allow him to initiate ECM attacks), but is more appropriate for his scout background. Unexpected things can emerge from this process. For example, Aki's stunt Knows the Market gives her easy access to cash, but it doesn't really make her more financially secure—her wealth track can still lead to negative consequences pretty easily. This makes sense of Lam's choice to have Credits-1 while also having a stunt that gives effective him Credits-3.

| PERSONAL DATA AND HISTORY | | | | | 1.Date of preparation | |
|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|-------------|---|--|
| 2. Name | | Garren (alias Tamar Bendigo) | | | 3. Rank and service | Commodore (Navy) |
| 4. Homeworld UWP | | C000742-C | | | 5. Commendations | SEH |
| 6. ASPECTS | | | | | 7. STRESS TRACKS | |
| 6.1. Homeworld aspect | | Every way is up | | | 7.1. Health (3 boxes, 4 if Endurance-1 or 2, 5 if Endurance-3 or 4, 6 if Endurance-5) | |
| 6.2. Homeworld aspect | | I know lost causes | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.3. Enlistment aspect | | Officer material | | | 7.2. Composure (3 boxes, 4 if Resolve-1 or 2, 5 if Resolve-3 or 4, 6 if Resolve-5) | |
| 6.4. Enlistment aspect | | Who needs a horizon? | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.5. Service aspect | | For the Imperium | | | 7.3. Wealth (boxes, 4 if Credits-1 or 2, 5 if Credits-3 or 4, 6 if Credits-5) | |
| 6.6. Service aspect | | The Navy is not enough | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.7. Cross-training aspect | | Lost my command | | | 7.3. Wealth (boxes, 4 if Credits-1 or 2, 5 if Credits-3 or 4, 6 if Credits-5) | |
| 6.8. Cross-training aspect | | Unwanted fame | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.9. Mustering out aspect | | Jump drive and a vacc suit | | | 9. STUNTS | |
| 6.10. Mustering out aspect | | The drugs quiet the voices | | | 9.1. Stunt and effects | |
| 8. SKILL ARRAY | | | | | Ship-shape: roll down health hits instead of up | |
| Endurance | 5 | Resolve | 4 | Tactics | 4 | 9.2. Stunt and effects |
| Engineering | 3 | Navigation | 3 | Zero-G | 3 | Ship tactics: use navigation for gunnery (Gunnery-3) |
| Vacc suit | 2 | Energy Wpn | 2 | Prospecting | 2 | 9.3. Stunt and effects |
| Alertness | 2 | Pilot | 1 | Intimidate | 1 | Rope-a-dope: use endurance for brawling (Brawling-3) |
| Streetwise | 1 | Credits | 1 | Computer | 1 | |
| 10. Notes | | | | | | |

| PERSONAL DATA AND HISTORY | | | | | 1.Date of preparation | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|-------------|---|------------------------|
| 2. Name | | Aki Murashibo | | | 3. Rank and service | Merchant service |
| 4. Homeworld UWP | | A445987-D | | | 5. Commendations | |
| 6. ASPECTS | | | | | 7. STRESS TRACKS | |
| 6.1. Homeworld aspect | | Honour bound | | | 7.1. Health (3 boxes, 4 if Endurance-1 or 2, 5 if Endurance-3 or 4, 6 if Endurance-5) | |
| 6.2. Homeworld aspect | | Taste for finery | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.3. Enlistment aspect | | Proficient yet bored | | | 7.2. Composure (3 boxes, 4 if Resolve-1 or 2, 5 if Resolve-3 or 4, 6 if Resolve-5) | |
| 6.4. Enlistment aspect | | Cuts through red tape | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.5. Service aspect | | Afraid of chaos | | | 7.3. Wealth (boxes, 4 if Credits-1 or 2, 5 if Credits-3 or 4, 6 if Credits-5) | |
| 6.6. Service aspect | | Space belongs to humanity | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.7. Cross-training aspect | | "It's just a world." | | | 7.3. Wealth (boxes, 4 if Credits-1 or 2, 5 if Credits-3 or 4, 6 if Credits-5) | |
| 6.8. Cross-training aspect | | Shame of my family | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6.9. Mustering out aspect | | Universal ambitions | | | 9. STUNTS | |
| 6.10. Mustering out aspect | | Silver tongued black sheep | | | 9.1. Stunt and effects | |
| 8. SKILL ARRAY | | | | | Knows the market (twice): use broker for credits (Credits-5) | |
| Broker | 5 | Carousing | 4 | Intimidate | 4 | 9.2. Stunt and effects |
| Forgery | 3 | Admin | 3 | Science | 3 | Military Grade Broker |
| Energy Wpn | 2 | Gambling | 2 | Computer | 2 | 9.3. Stunt and effects |
| Dexterity | 2 | Blade | 1 | Ground Veh. | 1 | |
| Equestrian | 1 | Vacc suit | 1 | Medical | 1 | |
| 10. Notes | | | | | | |

Optional Rule: Survival

Some die-hard Classic *Traveller* players might feel that this system does not present any inherent risk to their character, that the fun in rolling up Classic *Traveller* characters is having them die over the course of character generation. For those players, at the end of character generation, you may choose to roll four fudge dice, and any negative result means your character has died.

Optional survival rule for survival roll: If you can use your character's Aspects to achieve a net roll of zero, then you have been maimed or injured, but are still alive. Work that into your story...

Optional Rule: Psionics

With thereferee's permission, Psionics can be introduced. Psionic characters are built as any other characters, but players have the option to include up to five further skills within their skill pyramid: Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Telekinesis, Awareness, and Teleportation.

Additionally, the total of a character's Psionic skill values may not exceed 10. Psionic skills cannot be made Military-grade. To use Psionics, characters must also take the stunt Psionic. Typically, there will also be an Aspect, such as "Hunted for my brain" "Government lab rat" or "Paranoid beyond belief", perhaps reflecting a local government's suppression of Psionics. Each use of Psionics that achieves a Superb result (+5) costs a fate point, in addition to any fate points spent ensuring the success.

Telepathy: the mental ability to contact other minds. From a general awareness of intelligent lifeforms in an adjoining room, through the reading of emotions and surface thoughts, to the ability to send thoughts, and (at the highest levels) to initiate sustained psychic assaults, this talent represents the greatest threat to non-psionic individuals. All telepaths also maintain a psionic shield, protecting them from telepathic interference, an ability that can only be duplicated with ungainly, high-tech helmets. Difficulties for sensing minds, communicating, and reading thoughts are governed by range (between 2 and 7); at close range, it is possible to read a person's most private thoughts (difficulty 7) or to cause psychic damage (difficulty 8).

Clairvoyance: some psionic individuals have had their mind's eye opened, and are able to perceive places remote from themselves. Sometimes the sense is only a vague basic description, at times it permits a visual image or an eavesdropping on a conversation; at some levels the image is both visual and auditory, and distances across a planet can at times be perceived. Difficulty is governed primarily by range (between 3 and 6), with a +2 for combined clairvoyance and clairaudience.

Telekinesis: is the ability to physically manipulate perceived physical objects with the mind. Generally, the masses are very light, but a few exceptional telekinetics can carry their own body weight. Difficulties represent a combination of mass moved (3 for 1g, 5 for 1kg, 7 for 100 kg), and range, with an additional

+2 for operating at a distance of more than 50 metres to the maximum of 200 metres.

Awareness: the ability to mentally affect the character's own body. The psionic individual can enter a state of suspended animation, enhance their physical characteristics (strength, endurance, and for some dexterity), and, at the highest levels, they can even regenerate to heal physical damage. Entering suspended animation for a week has a difficulty of 3. Enhanced characteristics last for an hour, and operate at +1 for every two points achieved on the roll, to a maximum of +6. To heal physical or composure damage, a box's value equals two for each number of its position on the relevant track. Example: Barthen, with Awareness-4, attempts to regenerate during a firefight, and rolls +2, for a total of +6. The player may erase the damage done to the third box in the track, or to the first two boxes.

Teleportation: allows the instantaneous transfer of the psionic individual from one location to another. The character must have an accurate mental image of the destination, and the law of conservation of momentum means that there can be some serious consequences when teleportation occurs on a continental or planetary level. Nevertheless, talented teleporters can often end up where they intend, often with their clothing and personal effects. Difficulties differ due to range (+1 to +5), with an additional cost (+2) for teleportation with personal effects (clothing, etc.), and an additional +1 if the individual is carrying equipment, bags, etc.

The decision to introduce psionics can potentially disrupt a game significantly. As has been described, Psionic skill checks are typically made against rigorous difficulty levels. In all cases, the referee determines parameters and precise effects. In the case of Awareness and Teleportation, failing an intended roll might nevertheless achieve partial results. (For those with access to *Classic Traveller*: difficulty levels represent a combination of level and point cost.)

Combat

Combat in *Traveller* needs to be lethal. Intimidation is a skill but during combat (and often outside of it) true intimidation in *Classic Traveller* derives from the genuine danger a weapon puts the characters in. To this end the basic stress track length for Health, Composure, and Wealth is 3.

The Combat Game

Combat in *Spirit of the Far Future* is a game in itself. A lot of games try to blur this distinction between task resolution and combat and they do so with excellent intentions. *Traveller*, however, has probably the most proudly displayed and distinct subsystems for combat and space combat of any game before or since. They are so distinct that they have spawned several board games, each of which elaborates a sub-system and can be re-inserted into the role-playing game for additional detail. So this is a sub-game too. It does, however, bear a striking relationship to the rest of the task system.

As combat in *Traveller* is a tactical sub-game, not unlike starship combat, so we'll try to keep that theme. In this case the existing *Spirit of the Century* rules actually suffice though we add some elements to increase the tactical play and we clarify some aspects of movement that are not well addressed in the existing rules (particularly moving through obstacles).

RANGES

A combat session should take place on a map laid out in “Zones”. Transition between zones may have some action cost associated with it (doors, etc.) or not, using a mechanism referred to as a border. Range is in “number of zones” and is pretty loose, but generally:

Characters in the same zone are in hand to hand combat range. They can punch, grapple, and stab with ease.

Characters in adjacent zones can be poked with sticks with some effort—a couple of meters distant or so.

Characters five zones apart are at the limit of effective rifle range—hundreds of meters.

MOVEMENT

Movement occurs before an attack. In a combat situation, moving from one zone to a neighbouring zone is permitted without a roll and without a penalty. If a player wishes to move more than 1 zone, he may roll Dexterity and count successes. He may use these successes for movement in addition to his free move of one zone to a maximum of 3 zones total.

Borders with a multiple move cost to pass through (like a closed door or difficult terrain) can be moved through with one turns’ expenditure (if it’s sufficient) or can be *eroded* over multiple turns. So, for example, trying to move through a closed door with border value 2, a player adjacent to it could erode it by 1 and still make a combat action or make a Dex roll and forfeit a combat action. At a minimum he will erode the border value by 1 but he may well generate enough successes to open the door and move through it. Any number of successes may be brought to bear on border obstacles as long as the three zone movement limit is maintained.

Borders that have a state—a door, for example, which might have a border value of 2 in its closed state and no border value in its open state—change state when the border value is paid and remain in that state until the border value is paid again. So a door that someone has already paid to pass through is now in the open state and costs nothing to pass through until someone pays 2 movement successes to close it. Some borders may have a state that is not reversible—for example an obstacle that must be dismantled somehow and cannot easily be put back together—in which case the border reverts permanently to the new state’s border value (probably zero, but areferee could get creative here).

ACTIONS

Every combat round each player is polled in Alertness order (highest to lowest) for their action. The player will announce their character’s action for the round and will interpret it, with the assistance of thereferee, in game mechanical terms as a change in position (movement) and/or a skill test roll of some kind with appropriate results.

Examples of combat declarations

It might not be clear just how one might phrase ones actions to accomplish some tasks, especially attacks on composure tracks. Here are some examples that might give you ideas of your own.

“I spray them with lead to keep their heads down”—fire an SMG into the neighbouring Zone to cause one composure hit to everyone in the zone. Check Firearms.

“I shoot him in the head”—fire a body pistol at a specific target in a neighbouring Zone to cause one health hit to the declared target.

“I throw a grenade behind their cover to wipe them out”—roll Dexterity to attack everyone in the target zone.

“I point the fusion gun at his head and remind him how these work”—roll a Military-grade Energy Weapons to cause 3 composure hits (Extremely Lethal) to the target.

Defences should be any skill that the player can sell to thereferee or vice versa. “I dive for cover” is probably Dexterity. “I blaze away at him, ruining his shot” is probably Firearms.

TAKING DAMAGE

Weapons may inflict one, two, or three boxes depending upon their Features (see Equipment)—they inflict one box at the difference between attack and defence rolls (shift) and additional ones at boxes below. Otherwise the rules for damage remain as written in *Spirit of the Century*.

Consequences can be used to buy down one damage box. A mild consequence reduces a damage box by one step. A moderate consequence reduces a damage box by two steps. A severe (major) consequence reduces a damage box by four steps. The mitigation provided by a consequence is against the box (or position past the last box) that would be marked—that is, if a hit rolls up because the box hit is filled, it is the rolled up position that must be mitigated. This makes your final hit box very precious indeed. A player may only ever have a maximum of three consequences and may only have a maximum of one of each type regardless of the track the consequence was scored against.

A character is out of play when he sustains a hit past his damage track that he cannot mitigate immediately.

Characters remove consequences through rest and healing at a more attenuated rate than in *Spirit of the Century*: characters cannot be removing consequences until the associated stress track has been cleared (and as we detailed earlier, this is not instantaneous but rather dependent on the number of boxes and the associated skill). Once clear, however, consequences are removed exactly as per *Spirit of the Century*.

COMPOSURE ATTACKS

Any attack can be made against either composure or health tracks. They are made with any weapons skill. Characters may attempt composure attacks without using weapons, in which case the character also gains the temporary Aspect, “Sitting Duck”. Armour affects composure attacks just as it does health attacks but only those that use a weapon.

Consequences will fade with time – characters heal, rumors die down, and distance brings perspective. How long this takes depends upon the severity of the consequence, which in turn depends upon how it was received.

Mild consequences are removed any time the character has the opportunity to sit down and take a breather for a few minutes. These consequences will last until the end of the current scene, and will usually be removed after that. The only exception is if there is no break between scenes – if the character doesn't get a chance to take five, the consequence will remain in place.

Moderate consequences require the character get a little more time and distance. A good night's sleep or other extended period of rest and relaxation is required. Moderate consequences remain in place until the character has had the opportunity to take several hours (at least 6) of "downtime." This may mean getting sleep in a comfortable bed, spending time with a charming member of the opposite sex, reading by the fire, or anything else of that ilk, so long as it's appropriate to the consequence. An afternoon of hiking might be a great way to get past a Heartbreak consequence, but it's not a great choice for a Bad Ankle.

Severe consequences require substantial downtime, measured in days or weeks. Generally this means that such a consequence will linger for the duration of a session, but will be cleared up before the next adventure begins.

If the character is in back-to-back sessions where no in-game time passes between them, such as in a multi-part adventure, he gets a break – any consequences he begins the session with are treated as one level lower for how quickly they're removed.

FIRST BLOOD

When a character is hit for damage on an unblemished Health track, the attack is automatically against both Health and Composure tracks. After this initial combat shock all attacks are against health or composure but not both. See the examples below for first fire resolutions. Both tracks must be mitigated separately by consequences (ouch!).

OUT OF AMMO

Anyone using a projectile-based firearm automatically gets the Aspect "Out of Ammo" to be compelled liberally, but which cannot be free-tagged.

EXAMPLE: PANKO UNDER FIRE!

Panko has four boxes in his health stress track and the third is already marked:
□□☒□.

He takes a 4-box hit to his Health track from a Gauss rifle which does three boxes of damage. This would mark the 4-box, the 3-box, and the 2-box. The three is already filled so that rolls up to the 5-box which doesn't exist, leaving him with:
□☒☒☒×.

If he can't mitigate that hit past his track, he's out, so he will need to use a severe consequence and reduce the 5-box hit to a 1-box (severe consequence reduces a hit by 4 and 5-4=1), leaving him with: ☒☒☒☒.

He might want to use another consequence to open up the 1- or 2-box as the next hit will be both lethal and unavoidable—even a 1-box hit now will roll up to a 5-box, and no consequence will save him from that.

So Panko's player chooses to take two consequences. He takes the severe so Panko doesn't die and he takes a mild to keep the 1-box open: □☒☒☒.

For the consequences he chooses, "Spurting blood every step of the way" (his mild Consequence) and "They give you ten fingers so you have lots of spares" (his severe Consequence). He also chooses to flee.

In the next round, Panko's enemies will be able to free tag either or both of those consequences for a bonus to their attacks (or any other rolls they care to make). This is the chief danger of consequences: they give your opponent immediate and substantial advantage.

Weapons

Weapons are grouped according to the skill that uses them.

BRAWLING

"Rules? In a knife fight? No rules!" Brawling involves the nitty gritty fighting with fists, found weapons, clubs, and knives.

Fists: range 0, damage 1 (composure damage only if untrained).

Found weapons: range 0, damage 1. Found weapons can be anything in the hands of an accomplished brawler: bottles, plates, a fireplace poker, or a handy chair.

Knife: range 0, damage 2. A knife in the hands of a brawler has slightly different characteristics than a knife in the hands of a person trained in bladed weapon combat — it's still effective but it's an extension of his fists and consequently functions inside fist ranges, but does more damage.

Martial arts are represented with Military-grade Brawling, and effectively add +2 Penetration to Brawling attacks, and +1 to Brawling rolls in defence.

BLADE WEAPONS

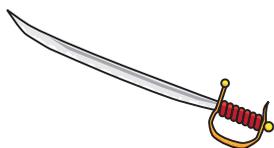
The Blade Weapons skill covers all melee weapons. If a player wishes his character to own such a weapon it should simply be granted. There is no obvious reason to differentiate or restrict them as thematic restriction comes out of law levels anyway. Credit check to acquire a blade anywhere is -2.

Knife: range 0-1, damage 1. This isn't meant to imply that knives and rapiers are the same thing, but rather that their game mechanical stats work out to be pretty much identical.

Cutlass: range 0-1, damage 2. This is the standard ceremonial weapon of the

Knives

Note that the Knife appears both as a Brawling-based weapon and as a Blade Weapon; this represents different ways the weapon can be used: additional damage if used as a brawling weapon; slightly more range if used as a blade weapon, depending on the user's skill.



Imperial Marines and a fairly common piece of equipment on low tech worlds or anywhere with a *code duello* in force.

Broadsword: range 1, damage 2 (Lethal), Penetration 1, 2-handed. Broadsword includes any long two-handed blade. While not a common weapon, where technology and industry have fallen behind, these are the mainstay of the heavy infantry.

Spear: range 1, damage 1, Penetration 2. Any long stick with a pointy end is a spear. Wherever technology has fallen, these cheap and effective weapons will be common.

Military-grade Blade Weapons may represent knowledge of low tech ranged weapons, such as bows and crossbows.

Longbow: range 2-3, damage 1. All hand drawn bows fall into this category, from short bows to longbows. Longbows will be common in low technology hunting cultures.

Behind the Curtain

In order to create the weapon statistics we gave weapons “features” and then stacked them up. If you want to create your own weapons, here are the features we used:

Accurate: weapon grants the user +2 to attack rolls on an opponent’s health track. (ACR, Gauss rifle, laser rifle)

Lethal: weapon does two boxes instead of one. (ACR, shotgun, Gauss rifle, laser rifle/carbine)

Extremely lethal: weapon does three boxes instead of two. (plasma and fusion guns)

Area effect: user applies his roll to everyone in the target zone (health or comp)

Penetration: weapon reduces effective armour values

Range: all weapons have a range of zones in which they can be used normally. Each zone outside this range confers a cumulative -2 on attack rolls.

Fusing range: weapon cannot be used at all below its minimum range.

Crossbow: range 2-4, damage 1. The crossbow is a mechanically drawn bow that can consequently be drawn with substantial force. Crossbows will be common in pre-gunpowder military cultures.

Blowgun: range 1-2, damage 1 (composure only). The blowgun depends on poisons to deal any damage at all and consequently we model it as doing composure damage only. Therefore could, of course, invent more amusing poisons.

FIREARMS

Firearms covers all projectile weapons of a mundane variety: rifles, pistols, shotguns, sub-machineguns, body pistols, and so forth.

Some firearms have ammunition types—an ammunition type can be selected going into combat or at any reload action (compelled or voluntary). Ammunition effects do not stack with other ammunition effects: a weapon may use only one ammunition type at a time.

Some firearms have modes—these are switched modes of operation that can be changed at any time by the firer without costing any action. Mode effects do not stack with other mode effects: a weapon may be in only

one mode at a time. The Area effect feature of some modes causes the attack to apply to all units in the targeted zone. If the range is zero—that is, the firer is in the same zone as his targets, the rule has some convoluted exceptions. Namely, if the weapon is directed, the firer is unaffected and if the weapon is undirected (like a grenade) then the firer is affected. It should be noted that because tagging an Aspect affects the roll, and with Area effect there is still only one roll, Maneuvers become extremely powerful. Split up.

Modes and ammunition types stack. A weapon firing ammunition that grants 3 penetration in a mode that grants Area effect gets both.

Pistol: range 0-2, damage 1. Pistol covers any chemically powered slug thrower designed to be fired with one hand. Whether single shot, revolver or auto-loading pistol, these stats will suffice. Pistols are common in urban environments that support the technology and are popular for their concealability.



Rifle: range 2-4, damage 1. This category includes pump, bolt-action, and autoloading rifles intended for civilian use. They will be common on any world with wildlife on it.

Shotgun: range 1-3, damage 2 (Lethal). The shotgun is the most basic practical firearm and is found on practically any system with the technology to make steel and gunpowder. It's a flexible hunting or defensive weapon and military and police variants exist designed to counter ambushes or destroy locks.

SMG: range 1-3, damage 1, Area effect. Submachineguns are small weapons, between pistol and rifle size, that fire multiple bullets with a single trigger pull. They attack all targets in a target zone. SMGs are popular urban weapons and are typical equipment for police on many worlds.

Body pistol: range 0-1, damage 1. The body pistol is a tiny pistol made of high technology plastics or composites making it very hard to detect. Its small size and potentially fragile structure mean that it's limited to firing small or low velocity ammunition, but its extraordinary concealability make it popular in some specialised circumstances.

Some weapons are designed for operation in zero gravity. They are generally less effective than their normal counterparts in some fashion. They may be fired in gravity by Firearms skill or Zero-G Combat (at -2 skill level), which is discussed in the section on Combat.

Snub Pistol: range 0-1, damage by ammunition type, no Zero-G combat check when fired. The snub pistol is a low velocity pistol designed to limit recoil for use in low gravity environments. Because the low velocity dramatically reduces the effectiveness of the weapon as a pure kinetic energy weapon, varying ammunition types are available to compensate.

Ammunition type: Slug—damage 1.

Ammunition type: Tranq—damage 2 (Lethal) but all composure damage.

Accelerator Rifle: range 1-3, damage 1, no Zero-G combat check when fired. Another solution to the recoil problem is to launch the projectile with a strong spring to non-lethal velocities where a rocket motor ignites. At very close ranges the rocket motor has not had time to build up any speed, making the weapon ineffective, but at longer ranges it does as much damage as any rifle.

MILITARY-GRADE FIREARMS

Military-grade firearms are inaccessible without the stunt and usable at 2 ranks below Firearms without it. If the character has no firearms skill, then treat it as any untrained skill (level -1).

ACR

The Advanced Combat Rifle represents the pinnacle of chemical slug projectors. It fires high velocity ammunition in both full and semi-automatic modes and can fire multiple ammunition types. Most also sport an integral grenade launcher or can fire specialised grenades from the barrel. Range and accuracy are by Mode and damage and penetration are by Ammunition type.

Ammunition type: Slug ammo—damage 2 (Lethal), Penetration 1

Ammunition type: armour piercing ammo—Penetration 3, damage 1 (remove Lethal)

Mode: single shot—range 1-4, +2 to attack (Accurate)

Mode: full auto—range 1-4, Area effect

Mode: RPG—may fire an RPG instead of regular fire. No other bonuses. See the RPG specs for range and effects.

Gauss rifle

“Gauss rifle” refers to any man portable projectile launcher that uses electromagnetic force to accelerate the projectile. These weapons typically have very high rates of fire and deliver extremely high velocity ammunition to long ranges. Most also sport an integral grenade launcher or facility to fire barrel-launched grenades exactly as the ACR. Characteristics of the gauss rifle depend upon the mode in which it is fired.

Mode: single shot—range 1-5, +2 to attack (Accurate), damage 2 (Lethal), Penetration 2

Mode: full auto—range 1-5, Area effect, Penetration 2

Mode: burst fire—range 1-4, +2 to attack (Accurate), damage 3 (Extremely lethal), Penetration 2

Mode: RPG—may fire an RPG instead of regular fire. No other bonuses. See the RPG specs for range and effects.

MILITARY-GRADE DEMOLITIONS

Military-grade Demolitions should give access to specialized explosives but also to grenades and other offensive explosive gear. They are either thrown or fired from a rifle. Thrown grenades use a Dexterity roll. Rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) may be fired by Military-grade firearms or by Military-grade Demolitions. These have a built in minimum fusing range that cannot be overridden—they will not explode until they have travelled a certain range.

TL5 Frag Grenade: range 0-2 (thrown), damage 1, Area effect. This is your basic fragmentation grenade, a small sphere or cylinder of high explosive sheathed in a scored or coiled metal sheath designed to fragment on detonation.

TL5 Smoke Grenade: range 0-2 (thrown), Area effect, adds the Aspect “Can’t See a Thing” to the zone. Smoke grenades emit a large volume of obscuring smoke, often coloured to aid in target designation or area indication for extraction.

TL13 TDX Grenade: range 0-2 (thrown), damage 1, Area effect, Penetration 5. TDX is an explosive that is strongly biased perpendicular to the force of gravity, creating a focused disc-shaped explosion that does a great deal of damage. In zero gravity environments TDX grenades behave exactly as a frag grenade.

TL7 RPG Frag: fusing range 2-4 (fired), damage 1, Area effect. On impact this weapon is identical to a frag grenade, but it is designed to be fired from a specialised launcher or a rifle appropriately equipped. It uses a brief rocket motor to achieve substantial range.

TL7 RPG Smoke: fusing range 2-4 (fired), Area effect, adds the Aspect “Can’t See a Thing” to the zone. On impact this weapon is identical to a smoke grenade, but it is designed to be fired from a specialised launcher or a rifle appropriately equipped. It uses a brief rocket motor to achieve substantial range.

TL13 RPG TDX: fusing range 2-4 (fired), Area effect, Penetration 5. On impact this weapon is identical to a TDX grenade, but it is designed to be fired from a specialised launcher or a rifle appropriately equipped. It uses a brief rocket motor to achieve substantial range.

ENERGY WEAPONS

Energy Weapons cover all mundane energy weapons which, in *Traveller*, are basically the laser rifle and the laser carbine. These weapons are recoilless and can be fired in low (or no) gravity without penalty:

Laser rifle: range 2-4, damage 2, +2 to hit (Accurate). The laser rifle is the standard energy weapon of the far future, doing damage by superheating a small region of the target, causing burns and steam explosions. It is powered by an attached power pack worn on the hip or back and generates no recoil. Its accuracy derives from the fact that there is no interesting delay between triggering and impact.



Laser carbine: range 1-4, damage 1, +2 to hit (Accurate). A lighter variant of the laser rifle designed for civilian use and target designation. A common secondary longarm for forward observers to use for calling in artillery or orbital strikes, the laser carbine can be fired in a low power mode that does no damage but illuminates targets for precision guided munitions.

MILITARY-GRADE ENERGY WEAPONS

Here are the fusion guns.

Plasma gun: range 1-3, +2 to hit (Accurate), damage 3 (Extremely Lethal), Penetration 3; TL 12 requires battle dress, TL 14 is man portable. The plasma gun is the first iteration of the high end energy weapons, firing a column of superheated hydrogen down a vacuum initiated by a ring laser. The plasma dissipates relatively quickly but releases an enormous amount of energy. Early versions require battle dress to absorb the recoil but later versions sport various recoil compensation equipment.

Fusion gun: range 1-3, +2 to hit (Accurate), damage 3 (Extremely Lethal), Penetration 5; TL 13 requires battle dress, TL 15 is man portable. At this stage in energy weapon development, the energy density in the plasma beam is such that semi-sustained fusion reactions are occurring inside the beam, dramatically increasing its effectiveness. As with the plasma gun, early variants require battle dress armour in order to compensate for recoil but at the pinnacle of development the technology is fully man portable.

WEAPONS SUMMARY

| Weapon | Range | Dam. | Acc. | Pen. | Special |
|------------------|-------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Fists | 0 | 1 | | | composure only |
| Found | 0 | 1 | | | |
| Knife (Brawling) | 0 | 2 | | | |
| Knife (Blade) | 0-1 | 1 | | | |
| Cutlass | 0-1 | 2 | | | |
| Broadsword | 0-1 | 2 | | 1 | |
| Spear | 1 | 1 | | 2 | |
| Longbow | 2-3 | 1 | | | |
| Crossbow | 2-4 | 1 | | | |
| Blowgun | 1-2 | 1 | | | composure only |
| Pistol | 0-2 | 1 | | | |
| Rifle | 2-4 | 1 | | | |
| Shotgun | 1-3 | 2 | | | |
| SMG | 1-3 | 1 | | | area effect |
| Body pistol | 0-1 | 1 | | | |
| Snub pistol | 0-1 | | | | low recoil |
| slug | | 1 | | | |
| tranq | | 2 | | | composure only |

| Weapon | Range | Dam. | Acc. | Pen. | Special |
|---------------------|-------|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Accelerator rifle | 1-3 | 1 | | | low recoil |
| ACR | | | | | |
| single shot | 1-4 | | +2 | | |
| full auto | 1-4 | | | | area effect |
| slug | | 2 | | 1 | |
| armour piercing | | 1 | | 3 | |
| Gauss rifle | | | | | |
| single shot | 1-5 | 2 | +2 | 2 | |
| full auto | 1-5 | 2 | | 2 | area effect |
| burst fire | 1-4 | 3 | +2 | 2 | |
| Laser rifle | 2-4 | 2 | +2 | | low recoil |
| Laser carbine | 1-4 | 1 | +2 | | low recoil |
| TL 12-13 Plasma gun | 1-3 | 3 | +2 | 3 | requires battle dress |
| TL 14 Plasma gun | 1-3 | 3 | +2 | 3 | |
| TL 13-14 Fusion gun | 1-3 | 3 | +2 | 5 | requires battle dress |
| TL 15 Fusion gun | 1-3 | 3 | +2 | 5 | |

Armour

Armour includes armour effects that are typical of non-armour equipment as well as other effects. Accessibility should be controlled by technology level. There is no specific skill associated with most armours, though Military-grade Vacc Suit is required to operate and maintain powered armour.

Armour has Defence value and possibly additional Special Effect. The Defence value is added to any roll the wearer makes when defending against weapons the armour is effective against.

Armour can be divided into two groups: those that require a skill to operate, and those that do not. The Defence bonus provided by armour applies only to attempts through violence to damage the health or composure track of the wearer. It does not apply to Maneuvers (attempts to place an Aspect on the wearer) nor Assessments. For composure attacks, it applies only if a Weapon or Firearms or Brawling (explicit combat skills) are being used to make the composure attack (as opposed to, say, Intimidation).

UNSKILLED

Some armour is just worn and you don't need any special skills to do so.

Jack/Mesh: Below a certain tech level, all armour offers a certain amount of

protection against physical combat, but can't stop a bullet. Whether it's a leather suit or a shirt or suit of metal link armour, the protection offered is mostly against blades. Defence +1 against all weapons.

Cloth: a shirt of ballistic cloth armour designed to deflect projectiles. Defence +2 against all weapons.

TL 10 Reflec: a thin reflective shirt designed to deflect lasers. May be worn under clothing or other armour. Defence +4 versus lasers only.

There is a TL 9 variant of Reflec, Ablat, which is a cheap but effective disintegrating anti-laser suit. It increases defensive rolls against lasers by 4, once. Cannot be repaired.

SKILLED ARMOUR (BLADE WEAPONS)

Some armour is specific to blade combat and can only be used by someone who has that skill.

Shield: a metal or wooden barrier attached to one forearm. Requires dedicated use of one arm. Defence +1 against all weapons.

Other objects may be used as a shield (e.g. dagger, axe), but this is effective only against attacks made with Brawling or Blade Weapons.

SKILLED ARMOUR (VACC SUIT)

These suits can be used without the Vacc Suit skill but they cannot be reliably pressurized without a Vacc Suit check. All armours in this category are pressurizable. Pressure is lost once a consequence has been taken due to damage on the physical track. See the Hostile Environments section for just how to deal with that puncture in a vacuum.

TL 7 Vacc Suit: not strictly armour but is resistant to damage and is pressurizable. Includes a helmet that may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. The Vacc Suit is not a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure and toxic atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold only. Defence +1 against all weapons.

TL 8 Combat Environment Suit: cloth armour but pressurizable. Includes a helmet which may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. The Combat Environment Suit is not a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure and toxic atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold only. Defence +2 against all weapons.

TL 11 Combat Armour: a laminate hardsuit, pressurizable. Includes a helmet which may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. Combat Armour is a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure, high pressure, toxic, radioactive, and corrosive atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold. Defence +3 against all weapons.

TL 14 Combat Armour: a bonded superdense hardsuit, pressurisable. Includes a helmet which may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. Combat Armour is a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure, high pressure, toxic, radioactive, and corrosive atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold. Defence +5 against all weapons.

SKILLED ARMOUR (MILITARY-GRADE VACC SUIT)

These suits cannot be operated at all without Military-grade Vacc Suit. All armours in this category are pressurizable. Pressure is lost once a consequence has been taken due to damage on the physical track. See the Hostile Environments section for what to do about that when it matters.

TL 13 Battle Dress: a powered crysteel hardsuit, pressurisable, and augmenting user strength and endurance. Includes a helmet which may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. Battle Dress is a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure, high pressure, toxic, radioactive, and corrosive atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold. At this technology level, Battle Dress has automated components to deal with loss of suit integrity, reducing the difficulty of any repair checks by 1. Defence +4 against all weapons; Powered - strength and endurance 5; Self repairing - repair check difficulties reduced by 1.

TL 15 Battle Dress: a powered bonded superdense hardsuit, pressurisable, and augmenting user strength and endurance. Includes a helmet which may include tech appropriate electronics. If the wearer sustains a consequence to mitigate any Health track hit, the suit loses pressure. Battle Dress is a hardsuit—it protects against low pressure, high pressure, toxic, radioactive, and corrosive atmospheres, and extremes of heat and cold. At this technology level, Battle Dress has automated components to deal with loss of suit integrity, reducing the difficulty of any repair checks by 2. Defence +5 against all weapons; Powered - strength and endurance 5; Self repairing - repair check difficulties reduced by 2.

Combat Examples

These are first fire resolutions, affecting both composure and health tracks as per “First Blood” rules.

BODY PISTOL AGAINST CUTLASS, NO ARMOUR

Round 1: Gor’esh

Surprising a local farmer in town on a bender, Gor’esh decides to shoot and rob the poor sap. He draws his crafty Body Pistol and pumps a few rounds into the Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer. His attack roll (Firearms-3) is:  (3) for a total of 6. Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer tries to force the weapon in a safe direction with his Brawling-2 skill while he draws his sword. He rolls  (-1) for a total of 1.

Total shifts for Gor’esh, then, is $6-1=5$.

Round 1: Damage to Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer

Body pistols don't have any special effects, so that's a single 5-box hit on Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer. As he has Endurance-4 from all that physical labour, Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer has 5 boxes on his health track so the 5-box gets checked: □□□□☒. He takes a round through the thigh but is too tough to care. As this is first blood, he also takes a 5-box hit to his composure track which is only 4 long, so Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer takes a mild consequence, "Never been shot before" and reduces it by 1 to a 4-box hit: □□□☒.

Round 1: Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer

He's mad, though, and swings his cutlass at Gor'esh's head. The attack roll (Blade Weapons-5) is ☒☒☒☒ (1) for a total of 6. Gor'esh is not very dextrous so he fires desperately trying to make Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer flinch.

Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer offers a fate point to compel Gor'esh's "Out of Ammo" but Gor'esh declines, paying a fate point to Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer.

Gor'esh rolls his defence (Firearms-3): ☒☒☒☒ (-3) for a total of 0. That's 6-0=6 shifts for Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer.

Round 1: Damage to Gor'esh

Gor'esh only has 3 boxes on his health so he free tags Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer's new consequence, "Never been shot before" to increase his defensive roll by 2. Now there are only 4 shifts to deal with. Still, he needs to get both his health hit and his composure hit to three or below because he only has three boxes in each and his tracks currently look like:

Health □□□☒, and

Composure □□□☒.

Those tentative gray marks are past the end of his track! He takes a mild to bring his composure track down to a 3-box (□□☒) and a moderate to take his health track hit down to a 2-box (□☒☒). He takes "That's a big fricking knife" and "Spitting teeth".

Round 2: Gor'esh

Gor'esh decides it's time to flee, so makes a Dexterity-1 roll to get the heck out of there: he rolls ☒☒☒☒ (0) for 1 shift and can move to an adjacent zone.

Round 2: Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer

Sadly, an adjacent zone isn't nearly far enough and Veteran Swordsman Turned Farmer strikes again, rolling ☒☒☒☒ (0). Adding his Blade Weapons-5, that's a 5. Gor'esh blazes back with his body pistol, trying to get HP to miss his swing, and rolls ☒☒☒☒ (-1), adds his Firearms-3 for a total of 2. HP's shifts are 5-2=3. HP decides to free tag both Gor'esh's consequence—with all that pain and fear, Gor'esh can't see where he's shooting—and change that to 7 shifts.

Consequences

Recall that there are three kinds of consequences:

Mild: reduce stress effects by one box and recover with a few minutes of rest.

Moderate: reduce stress track effects by two boxes and recover with at least 6 hours of appropriate downtime and (for health) medical attention.

Severe: reduce stress track effects by four boxes and take weeks or even months of downtime to recover.

Round 2: Damage to Gor'esh

Gor'esh has to take his severe consequence or die—he needs to knock that 7 down to a 3. So he takes “Shattered gun arm” and marks off his 3-box (□☒☒). Now he's only got one box left and HP has another free tag coming.

Gor'esh begs for mercy, holding his butchered arm and spitting blood.

GAUSS RIFLE ON BURST FIRE AGAINST A COMBAT ENVIRONMENT SUIT

Round 1: Attack!

Our attacker is a TL-13 infantryman with the Military-grade Firearms stunt, allowing him to use the gauss rifle. He fire on his target, a TL-12 mercenary, with the rifle in burst fire mode and rolls ☒☒☒☒ (0) and adds his Firearms-5 for a total of 5. Our unhappy but well armoured defender is running and weaving, rolling ☒☒☒☒ (3) to add to his Dexterity-3 for a total of 6. $5-6=-1$.

The gauss rifle, however, is Accurate, and adds +2 to attack rolls. $-1+2=1$ so our attacker's total shift is 1.

The defender's combat environment suit has a defensive bonus of 2 but the gauss rifle has Penetration two and therefore ignores all of the combat environment suit's defence. The attacker's total shift remains at 1.

Burst fire on a Gauss rifle is Extremely Lethal (damage 3) so that marks one hit on the health and composure tracks (the other two roll down, off the track). The defender is rattled but unharmed and he definitely stopped a round or two with the armour.

FGMP-15 AGAINST BATTLE DRESS

Round 1: Attack!

An Imperial elite marine has Military-grade Energy Weapons and a tech 15 fusion gun, which he fires at his heavily armoured victim, another Imperial marine who stole his girl, and who has Health and Composure tracks of three boxes each. The attacker has Energy Weapons-3 and rolls a miraculous ☒☒☒☒ (4)! That's a total of 7 for the attack. The defender, electing to flee, rolls ☒☒☒☒ (3) and adds his Dexterity-2 for a total of 5. $7-5=2$, so the attacker has 2 shifts.

Fusion guns are Accurate, however, adding +2 to the attack. $2+2=4$ shifts now.

Battle Dress has a defensive bonus of 5 but the FGMP-15 has penetration 5, so the armour defence bonus is negated, making the final attack result still 4 shifts.

That's going to mark the 4, 3, and 2 box on the health and composure tracks.

That's going to go one past each stress track—there are only three boxes: Health □☒☒× and Composure □☒☒×! Now a -4 Consequence will remove either the Health track 4-hit or the Composure track 4-hit, but a -2 or -1 Consequence won't help any—reducing the 4 to a 2 still rolls up because the 2 box is checked now! He can, however, use a -1 Consequence to change one of the 2-box hits to a 1-box hit:

Health □☒☒ (Severe consequence, 4-box hit removed), and

Composure ☒□☒× (Mild consequence, 2-box hit changed to a 1-box hit),

...and then use a -2 Consequence to move the 4-box hit to the now empty 2-box:

Health ☐☒☒, and

Composure ☒☒☒ (Moderate consequence, 4-box hit changed to a 2-box hit).

Our target is still in the game but he's used all three of his Consequences to do so. As if that isn't bad enough, each Consequence is an Aspect and each one is free-tagable by any enemy once!

He chooses the consequences "Holy crap a fusion gun!" (mild composure consequence), "My armour, it does nothing!" (a moderate composure consequence), and "Third degree burns, but only on the front half of me" (a severe health consequence).

If his opponent wants him dead, shooting him again will certainly suffice. If he wants to capture the poor burned sod, just waving the FGMP-15 at him (Energy Weapons attack against composure) and free tagging all three consequences ought to do it—even a single shift will be enough.

Special Combat Conditions

ZERO GRAVITY

One of the more interesting combat environments is zero gravity. We have a skill for it, so the question is what does it do? When fighting in zero or low gravity the scene has the Aspect Zero Gravity or Low Gravity. This can be tagged as usual by participants.

Some weapons are recoilless, and designed for Zero-G: snub pistols, accelerator rifles, and lasers.

All attacks using weapons not designed for the environment use the Zero G Combat skill instead of their preferred skill (Brawling, Blade, Firearms).

Zero-G Combat rolls may also be called for to perform movement or other activity in zero-G or low gravity. The skill Zero-G Combat may also be used in normal gravity at -2, in place of Firearms to fire snub pistols and accelerator rifles only.

The skill Zero-G Combat does not confer knowledge of the maintenance and repair of any weapons: for that, checks need to be made against Firearms or Energy Weapons, as applicable.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS

Sometimes a fight will take place in an environment where the integrity of the suit is important not only to absorb combat damage but also to resist environmental effects. These might include low pressure, high pressure, or toxic atmospheres. In these cases a loss of suit integrity (any health track consequence) has serious ramifications.

When a suit capable of resisting the hostile environment loses integrity, the wearer must make a Vacc Suit check against difficulty 4 to repair it instead of a combat action. Each turn this check is failed (or the player refuses to declare a repair action and instead takes a combat action, in which case he automatically fails by 4) the character sustains a composure and health track hit on a box equal to the amount the check was missed by (negative shifts). Some environments may

set a different difficulty target to represent greater or lesser danger—the difficulty of 4 is intended for modelling zero pressure.

Adding Aspects

Combat decisions may also have the aim of adding a free-taggable Aspect to the opponent (a Maneuver in *Spirit of the Century* parlance), which may be tagged in a subsequent turn or by a different player.

“I grapple with him and attempt to pin him”—roll Strength to add the Aspect “pinned” to the opponent.

“I paint him with my laser targeting system”—roll Recon (or Military Grade Firearms) to add the Aspect “painted”.

With both of these examples, the effects last (in that they can be compelled) as long as the original attacker is doing something comparable. In the first example given, if the attacker has successfully pinned his opponent, the opponent will stay pinned as long as all combat actions can reasonably be thought to allow it to continue (e.g. attacks based on Strength and Brawling rolls, but not Firearms). Note also that a Strength roll now also becomes a reasonable defence (if the pinned opponent attempts to shoot, for instance), where it would not be otherwise.

Note also that in invoking Aspects, it is the roll which is affected. As a result, shooting a weapon with area effect (such as an SMG) at a target that includes one individual who has been “painted” with laser sights, increases the chances to hit all the targets in the area.

When you add an aspect in this fashion, the Aspect can be tagged for free exactly once, by you or by an ally. Once tagged the Aspect remains and can be tagged again in future, but never again for free. As these stack, an exciting strategy emerges for taking down powerful opponents....

See, this is also how mobs may become effective in combat. Let’s say seven villagers with pitchforks attack an Imperial Marine. They may not have much chance, but if they get close enough, six may attempt to add Aspects—“outnumbered”, “overwhelmed”, “bullied”, “surrounded”, and so on (none of which require any special non-villager skills). Even assuming only three of these attempts are successful, the seventh villager may free-tag them all and get +6 on his pitchfork attack, which can overcome the defence of the Battle Dress armour!

This is not quite problem-free: since the Marine, as defender, can gain spin (+1) if his defence exceeds any given attack by three or more: too many lame attacks actually increase the possible defence (or attack!) of the Marine.

Stacking free tags

In *Spirit of the Century* you can only free tag a single Aspect, but the authors have since recanted the position. Stack up as many as you can make sense of.

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