DROPFLEET
C O M M A N D E R

V1.1

Contents

Earth, 2673

After 160 years as refugees, humanity has returned to Earth.

Evicted from its birthplace, the forces of the United Colonies of Mankind have spent almost two centuries mustering their armies to launch a mass war against their enemy: the dreaded Scourge. Alien parasites from an unknown galaxy, the Scourge appeared without warning, destroying the previously peaceful society. What they didn't kill they captured and enslaved, forcibly bonding with their hosts.

Fighting off the parasitic threat as well as enemies from the enigmatic alien Shaltari and the splintered Post-Human Republic turned humanity into a militant race, one with a manifest destiny amid the stars.

The UCM launched their Reconquest campaign to take back the Cradle Worlds – verdant paradises seized by the Scourge. The battles have been long and fiercely fought, ending in costly victories that left the colonial fighters exhausted. Humanity is nothing if not tenacious though.

After a brief hole opened in the Scourge's defences by the courageous Resistance fighters left planetside, the UCM have seized their opportunity to attack. Their forces are battered, but the surprising opportunity of an assault on Earth itself is one that couldn't be passed up.

The power of the space-based fleet and the mobile troops of the UCM's army is mighty, but still not enough to fight even the weakened Scourge armada. At the eleventh hour, aid has appeared from some unlikely sources, forming one of the largest fleets ever witnessed.

The board is set; the Battle for Earth has begun.

THE BASICS

Ship Characteristics

The strengths and weakness of different ships and weapon systems in the game are shown through their characteristics. These show how fast they are, how much damage they can take and so on. You can see an example of a ship's stat sheet below.

UCM Lysander

Stealth Lighter

27 pts — D

Name	Scan	Sig	Thrust	Hull	A	PD	G	T	Special
Lysander	6"	0"	12"	2	6+	2	1-3	L	Atmospheric, Full Cloak, Launch, Open, Rare

Type	Lock	Attack	Damage	Arc	Special
Barracuda Missile Bay	4+	2	1	F/S/R	Close Action

Load	Launch	Special
Dropships	1	-

Stealth Observation: This ship can Survey a Cluster regardless of its Battlegroup Tonnage value. — E

A   **Stats Bar -** This shows all the key characteristics of a ship. From how fast it moves, to how survivable it is, its tonnage, and much more. We'll be going into detail on the stats bar over the next few pages.

B   **Weapon Systems -** This shows what weapons the ship is armed with. Accuracy, damage potential, arc of fire and more are shown here.

C   **Launch Capacity -** Some ships are able to launch Dropships, Bulk Landers and more. If the ship has a launch capacity, it is shown here. Ships without any do not have this bar on their stat sheet.

D   **Points Cost (Pts) -** All ships in the game cost points to field in your fleet. Ships with a higher points cost will generally be more potent, but you will not be able to field as many. This number is for a single ship within that group.

E   **Special Rules -** Some ships have unique special rules that are detailed here.

Stats Bar

Each ship has its own unique stats bar. Each column shows a different aspect of the ship. Getting to know these stats is the first step towards learning how to play Dropfleet Commander.

Name

What the ship type is called. Certain ships may have individual and unique names, but they always belong to a 'class' of ship. The name of the ship's class is shown here.

Scan

The Scan characteristic shows how good a ship is at spotting the enemy through a combination of sophisticated sensors, predictive software and crew competence. Scan range is primarily a 'technology' characteristic dictated by the best possible equipment that can be crammed on board so most ships from a particular race will have the same Scan value. Certain weapon systems can only be used within Scan range or become more effective when used within Scan range.

Signature

Signature shows how visible a ship is on enemy sensors and how far away it can be spotted. Most ships use forms of active countermeasures like chaff, ECM (electronic countermeasures – jamming) and other technologies to hide the ship by reducing its signature as much as possible. These countermeasures are considered to be in constant use and are taken into account in the ship's overall Signature. Certain kinds of damage, hard manoeuvring and firing weapon systems can all act to temporarily increase a ship's Signature. Signature can also be reduced in some circumstances, such as by adopting silent running protocols for example.

Thrust

Thrust is a ship's maximum move distance per game turn in inches – how far it can go across the tabletop in one move. Several factors such as the ship's orders or battle damage can affect available Thrust. Under ordinary circumstances a ship must use at least half of its available Thrust for movement each turn (see the Orders and Special Orders sections of the rules for more details).

Hull

Hull is the number of damage points a ship can withstand before it is destroyed. Hull is a function of overall size and inherent structural integrity. This means it is possible for ships with good armour to have a weak hull and vice versa. Lost Hull points can be tracked on a ship's base using the pegs and number system provided, or if players prefer with a dice/counter placed beside the ship.

Armour (A)

In comparison to civilian vessels, true warships are always 'armoured' in some way to make them more resistant to damage. This can range from the basic hardening of individual components and incorporating multiple redundant back-up systems to being sheathed in metres-thick plates of highly advanced armour. In game terms the Armour characteristic is a saving throw on a D6 against each point of Hull damage taken expressed as 3+, 4+ etc. When a ship is damaged roll a D6 for each point of damage inflicted on it. Each successful armour save negates one point of Hull damage.

Point Defence (PD)

All fighting ships carry some sort of point defence to protect themselves against small objects. Point Defences are the equivalent of Active Countermeasures on

ground based units; systems that identify and neutralise incoming threats to the ship – everything from meteorites to nuclear-tipped missiles.

The exact weapons used can take many forms: pulse lasers, rapid fire gauss guns, interceptor missiles, flak rockets, energised plasma arcs – the list is endless. All of these are small, fast-firing weapon systems with the response time necessary to intercept tiny, rapidly-moving targets at close range. For the most part Point Defence relies on quantity rather than quality, and the number indicated by this characteristic indicates the number of dice the ship can roll in self-defence when attacked by enemy Close Action weapons and some Launch Assets. These rules are covered later on.

Group (G)

Group indicates the normal operating parameters for ships of this class within the larger fleet. Smaller vessels such as frigates will tend to operate in groups of one to four of the same type of ship working together, while large vessels might only be found together in one or twos. The Group characteristic is used when choosing a fleet before the game (see Fleet Selection).

Tonnage (T)

There are four Tonnage categories in Dropfleet commander: **Light (L), Medium (M), Heavy (H) and Super Heavy (S).** As with the Group characteristic, Tonnage is primarily used in conjunction with Fleet Selection as players will often have to consider the Tonnage of the vessels under their command. Tonnage also figures into scenarios where victory conditions are often calculated using the tonnage of surviving vessels.

Special

This section lists any special rules that may apply to the ship. This represents particular traits of a ship's design, special abilities or weaknesses the vessel may have. A detailed list of all common ship Special Rules can be found in the 'Ship Special Rules' Section.

Some ships have unique rules that are specific to that faction and ship class alone, such as sensor jamming abilities or situational bonuses. Any unique Special Rules not in the 'Special' section of a ship's stats bar will be shown following the bar with details of the unique rules used.

Weapon System Characteristics

Most ships in Dropfleet are armed with one or more weapon systems. These can range from a mass of turret-mounted rail cannons to huge spinal-mount energy weapons capable of cutting enemy craft in half with a single blast.

Lock

Lock is the weapon system's 'to hit' roll and represents a combination of tracking speed and power-up delay as well as inherent accuracy. When rolling to hit, each of the weapon system's Attack dice scores a hit if it equals or beats the Lock value.

Attack

Attack shows the number of Attack dice the weapon system rolls, with each dice typically representing a salvo or volley from the same weapon system. Each attack dice has to score equal or higher than the weapon's Lock value to score a hit.

DAMAGE

Some weapon systems hit harder than others and will do a corresponding amount of damage to an enemy hull. Damage indicates the number of Hull points inflicted by each Attack dice from the weapon system which successfully hits and damages a ship.

ARC

Each weapon system has a designated fire arc it make attacks into. There are 4 arcs: **F – Front, F (N) – Front Narrow, R – Rear, S – Side.** Side facing weapons may also have an addition notation, i.e. Right or Left. If the weapon has no extra note and only says S it may fire to either side – left or right. If it has the (Right) or (Left) notation it may only fire on that side (in addition to any other arcs shown).

Weapon arcs are normally 90 degrees but some weapons systems are restricted to a 22 degree narrow (N) arc instead. Ship bases include these arcs for ease of use – thin ridges delineate front, side and rear arcs, and the raised area at the front the base shows the front narrow arc.

e.g. a ship has three weapons profiles. One has arc: F/S/R, the second has arc: S/R, and the last has arc: F/S (Right).

In this case the first weapon would be able to fire from its Front arc, either Side arc or its Rear arc.

The second weapon could fire from either one of its Side arcs or its Rear arc.

The last weapon may only fire from the Front arc or the arc on its Right side, as it has the S (Right) notation.

SPECIAL

A number of weapon systems have special rules to reflect their effects. See Special Weapons Rules for more information.

GAME COMPONENTS

DICE

Dropfleet uses six-sided dice throughout the game both for its ease of availability and robust handling characteristics. Most of the dice rolls players need to make require equalling or bettering a target number and are written as a number with a plus sign after it, i.e. 5+, meaning the dice must roll a 5 or 6 to succeed.

When referencing dice rolls the rules will refer to six-sided dice as a D6. Rolling more dice is indicated with a number before i.e. if instructed to 'roll 3D6', players would roll 3 dice, '4D6' would be 4 dice etc.

If you are asked to roll a D3, simply roll a D6 and a result of a 1 or a 2 would equal a 1, a result of 3 or 4 would equal a 2 and a result of 5 or 6 would equal a 3.

DICE ROLL MODIFERS

Certain special circumstances can mean that modifiers apply to dice rolls. These modifiers can be negative (e.g. -1 to the target number) or positive (e.g. +1 to the target number). Modifiers are always applied to the target number and they don't change the number you roll on the dice.

Modifiers can never make results impossible or a foregone conclusion. If a modifier would make a target number of 7+ or 1+ (i.e. impossible to achieve or impossible to fail), this is reduced to a 6+ and 2+ respectively.

For example, if you normally needed to roll a 4+ and had a +1 modifier to the target number you would only succeed on a roll of 5 or 6. Likewise if you needed a 5+ and had a -2 modifier, you would need a 3 or more to succeed (5+, with the minus 2 modifier = 3+ to succeed).

Rerolls

Sometimes players will have the ability to 'reroll' certain dice. This lets the player pick up dice that have produced an unsatisfactory result and roll them again. The result of the reroll always stands even if it is worse than the original. Rerolled dice may never be rerolled in any circumstances.

Tokens

Dropfleet Commander uses tokens and markers to track certain actions or events during a game. Many of these are designed to give both players a visual reminder of continuing effects and unit placement, but some are for convenience as it is often easier to use a dice or token next to a miniature than it is to have to keep notes.

Necessary on the tabletop (i.e. both players need to be aware):

- 'Spike' status markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Silent running markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Orbit level markers (can be found on the base provided)
- Clusters, Sectors and Launch Assets

Playing Space

Dropfleet Commander is usually played over a 4ft x 4ft gaming area, and scenarios in this book are based on this as the combat area. Players may find it easier to play on slightly wider tables to have space for reserves, destroyed ship miniatures, spare dice, and other game components.

Measuring distances

Dropfleet Commander uses inches for its unit of measurement. Players will need a tape measure or ruler marked in inches to measure distances. Throughout this book shorthand for measurements is used; quotation marks after a number indicate the inch distance, e.g. 12" would be 12 inches, 30" would 30 inches etc.

Pre-measuring

In Dropfleet Commander it is perfectly fine to pre-measure distances before moving or shooting, or at any time in between. Any 'fog of war' is taken into account in the game rules already and your captains (or equivalents) have the very best detection and calculation equipment of a future universe on hand. This means that players may measure any distances at any time.

Note that while pre-measuring means that any player may measure any distance at any time, sportsmanship should be considered and players are encouraged to take each other's word on measurements. Measuring every distance straight after your opponent has done just that leads to a very negative gaming experience all round.

Miniatures

Miniatures are the models you use for playing the game. In Dropfleet miniatures means one thing - ships; big ships, little ships, swarming fighters, kill-hungry bombers, torpedoes, drones, space stations, satellites and more.

For the purposes of clarity and ease of use, all distances in the game are measured from the flight stem of each ship or asset unless otherwise stated in specific rules.

Base Contact

Occasionally the rules will reference game objects being 'in contact' or tell players to place tokens or other game elements in 'base contact' with a miniature's base as a way of showing that a ship is in close proximity to something. In the case of ships with very large or irregular shaped bases this may not be possible – in such cases, place the token, ship etc. as close as possible to the base, or use a 'Traffic Jam' token as detailed below.

Traffic James and Ship Placement

An unfortunate reality of moving miniatures around on the tabletop is that occasionally you'll end with a 'traffic jam' where several miniatures need to be in the same place (or close to it) at the same time. This is especially true of larger ships which can overhang their bases by a considerable distance, but it can happen with the smallest of vessels as well. Movement in Dropfleet is generally flexible enough that a ship almost never has to move to an exact spot so the problems usually arise from trying to squeeze the last possible inch of movement or keep a weapon system in arc to fire.

The solution is to use a marker to show the exact position of the intersecting ships until they move far enough apart to place models in their correct positions again, in the meantime they are simply placed as close as possible. These markers should show ship facing, and players should be as precise as possible in their placement to avoid arguments.

Note that while not the best way of playing in tournaments or competitive play, some Players may decide on a different house rule for this situation. Simply rule that ships may not move to any position where they cannot be physically placed. This speeds up the game and reduces the use of tokens. However, it is not a fool proof option – in certain situations this can cause problems due to relative miniature size and placement when interacting with order. If it causes problems (even in friendly games), revert to using markers as above.

Groups & Battlegroups

Individual ships in Dropfleet Commander always belong to a Group. Multiple Groups belong to a Battlegroup. It's worth noting the distinct difference between Groups and Battlegroups, as it comes up a lot!

Battlegroups are assembled together to form your fleet, see Building Your Fleet for more details.

All ships of the same class in a Battlegroup automatically form a group together.

For example a UCM Battlegroup could be comprised of six Toulon Class frigates, two Berlin Class cruisers and a Madrid Class cruiser. It would therefore contain three groups; one comprising the six Toulons, one comprising two Berlins and one comprising the Madrid.

Ships in groups have to stay fairly close together so they can rapidly share combat information over secure links to instantly coordinate their actions and hinder enemy intelligence-gathering. Smaller ships with more limited communications gear and lower signature have to stay closer together to retain cohesion as a fighting unit and get the same benefits.

What that all means is that ships in the same group have to stay close to each other on the tabletop.

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 6 or less have a group coherency of 3".

Ships with a Hull characteristic of 7 or more have a group coherency of 6".

As with most of the distances in Dropfleet Commander, coherency is measured from the centre of one model to the centre of another, with the centre being the stem of the flight stand.

Special rules can increase or decrease the standard coherency distances for groups.

Battlegroup cohesion

The individual groups that make up a battlegroup are free to split up as much as they wish, but they avoid penalties to the battlegroup's overall effectiveness by staying closer together. When it comes to comparing Strategy Ratings (see Strategy Ratings for more details), **a battlegroup temporarily increases its Strategy Rating by +1 for each of its groups that is more than 12" away from any other group in the same battlegroup.**

Special rules can increase or decrease the standard 12" coherency distance for battlegroups.

When a group activates the first ship in it can be moved freely (subject to the normal rules for movement). Each subsequent ship in the group must end its movement within coherency range of at least one other ship in the group.

In the event that a ship finds itself outside coherency range (usually due to the group suffering casualties) it must move to be within coherency range of another ship from the group as soon as it has an opportunity to do so.

Some Groups have a special open coherency (most notably strike carriers and other troop deploying ships). These Ships do not have to maintain coherency and are not subject to either Battlegroup or Group coherency rules – they are effectively autonomous, though must still obey the rules for orders/special orders as their battlegroup.

Disagreements

The rules are written to cover as many conceivable eventualities as possible, but there will always be occasions where obscure situations are not addressed. If re-reading the relevant rules section does not provide an answer to a problem, and the players cannot agree on how to proceed, simply have one player roll a dice. On a 1-3 one interpretation is correct, on a 4-6 it is the other. This makes for a fair and impartial ruling when players can't agree, and stops further arguments.

Admirals

Fleets seldom succeed in battle without a good Admiral. In fluid situations, the actions and decisions of frontline leaders often separates victory from defeat.

Admirals cost points just like ships, but they do not have a Core Stat Sheet. Instead, they have an Admiral Stat sheet, such as below:

Admiral	AV	Allowed	Pts
UCMF Vice Admiral	4	C/B	80

AV – (Admiral Value): Represents the abilities of an Admiral (higher numbers are better). This affects things such as the roll to determine Initiative.

Allowed: Defines what sized engagement they can be chosen to partake in. In this case, a UCMF Vice Admiral can be taken for a Clash or Battle, but not a Skirmish (an action too small to usually merit his/her presence).

Pts: How many points it costs to field this Admiral. A player may only field 1 Admiral in their fleet.

Your Admiral may be placed in any ship in your fleet with a Tonnage value of M, H or S. If placed in a ship of Tonnage H you may upgrade your Admiral 1 level for free. If placed in a ship of Tonnage S you may upgrade your Admiral 2 levels for free. These free upgrades do not allow you to exceed the maximum level allowed by the game size (see Building Your Fleet for details).

Famous Admirals

Some Admirals have risen to legendary status, becoming household names, and are often held in fear, awe or infamy. These mighty individuals may occasionally be featured in battles. Famous Admirals may have several special abilities, and may even change the Fleet Roster to suit the unique fighting style for which they are famous.

Before a battle, all players must agree to the use of Famous Admirals before they can be chosen. Rules for these will be available as special online downloads and in future books.

Command Cards

Command Cards represent the specific actions and decisions made by the Admiral. Each card will state when it can be played and what its effects are. Command Cards add flavour and an additional tactical layer to games. Each race has a distinct Command Card deck which may not be altered in any way, unless specified in the rules. Players may play as many cards as they like during a turn until they run out. A player can draw cards up to a hand size equal to the Admiral Value (AV) of their Admiral in each Planning Phase. This value only applies here if the Admiral is on the table. If your Admiral is killed, the player may use an AV of 1 and must immediately discard command cards of their choice down to 1.

When a card is played or discarded for any reason it should be placed face-up in a discard pile. If a player runs out of cards in their deck, this discard pile should be turned face-down and shuffled into a new deck to draw from.
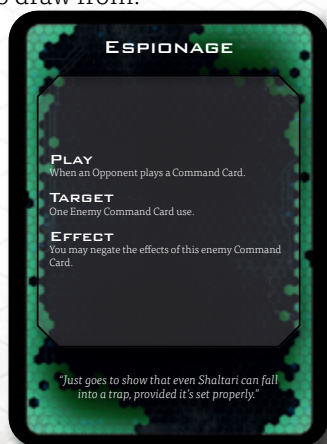
A typical Command Card is set out as follows:

Play: Describes when a card can be played

Target: Describes the allowed Target(s) of the card. Each Group can only be Targeted once per turn per player, although cards which do not specifically target them or ships within them will still take effect (e.g. 'Target: all friendly Groups').

Effect: Describes the effect the card has on the target. Before the card takes effect, other players may play cards in response. Effects stack in reverse order when multiple cards are played simultaneously (the most recently played card takes effect first). You may also choose to wait until another card has taken effect before playing another.

Orbital Layers

The basic Dropfleet rules cover fighting in space, but the truth is that battles out in the void between stars are rare events. The true prize in any interstellar conflict is gaining control of the planets in a solar system. Because of this the majority of combat between ships occurs in close proximity to a habitable (or at least colonisable) planet, moon or comparable celestial body.

Once an enemy fleet moves in to try to knock down satellite coverage and bombard targets on the surface it is only a matter of time before a full-blown invasion will be launched. This is the point where a defending fleet is forced to stand and fight or surrender control of the planet altogether.

There are three 'heights' or layers in orbital combat, with the table surface nominally representing ground level and ships floating somewhere in the layers above.

High Orbit/Space

Combat is rare in actual deep space but common in high orbit. Most large ships are designed to operate at this level, and as such are most effective in High orbit. Severe damage when at lower orbital layers is liable to cause Orbital Decay, a situation that can very easily become terminal for such large vessels.

Low Orbit

The exact parameters for what constitutes Low Orbit can vary a lot from planet to planet depending on composition and atmosphere. This 'interface' layer is the most common battleground for ships as attacking ships must come down to Low Orbit at some point to launch an invasion force, bombard the surface, and claim key orbits.

Atmosphere

Few ships are Atmosphere-capable, and even Strike Craft or munitions have to be specially configured to operate in Atmosphere without burning up on entry. However, to conquer a planet the invading force must enter Atmosphere in order to make a landing.

Limitations in Atmosphere

Atmosphere may only be entered by ships with the Atmospheric special rule. Any other ships are destroyed on entry. Ships in Atmosphere have their available Thrust reduced to 2". Ships moving into Atmosphere therefore lose any remaining movement apart from this 2".

Ships moving out of Atmosphere into Low Orbit must do so at the start of their movement, and follow the rules for moving up an Orbital Layer and do not suffer this penalty. (see Moving between Orbital Layers).

CORE RULES

Game Turn Sequence

A game of Dropfleet Commander is played out in a series of turns. The number of turns played will vary depending on the scenario being played but four to six turns for a game is typical. In each turn all of the ships on the tabletop will get a chance to move and shoot, known as Activating. The order that ships activate in is determined by their Strategy Rating.

Every ship in a player's fleet is fielded as part of a **Group**, which is a part of a larger formation called a **Battlegroup**. During the turn, Battlegroups on the tabletop activate one after another and the sub group of ships in them take their actions individually in an order of the controlling player's choosing. Once all Battlegroups have been activated the turn is over.

Planning phase

1. **Pick Battlegroup Cards:** Each player picks up their Battlegroup cards and stack them into strategy decks. When all players are ready the activation phase begins. Battlegroups that are unavailable to activate (usually for scenario reasons) may not be included in the strategy deck this turn

2. **Discard Cards:** Each player may now discard any unwanted Command Cards.

3. **Draw Cards:** Each player may now draw cards up to the Admiral Value (AV) of their most senior friendly Admiral on the table.

4. **Cleanup:** Any affects that result from special rules or Command Cards are addressed now.

Activation Phase

1. Both players reveal the top card of their strategy decks.

2. Compare the Strategy Rating on the cards revealed. The player with the lower Strategy Rating chooses whether they will go first or second. In the event of a draw both players roll a D6 and the high roller chooses who goes first. If both players roll the same number, roll again until one player rolls higher.

3. The first player activates the Groups indicated on their Battlegroup card one-by-one in the order they choose and completes all of their actions.

4. The second player then activates the Groups indicated on their Battlegroup card one-by-one and completes all of their actions.

5. The Battlegroup cards are placed on the discard pile.

6. Return to 1. When both players have no Battlegroup cards left to reveal, play moves onto the Roundup Phase.

Roundup phase

1. **Ground Combat:** Resolve any ground asset movement and combats.

2. **Launch Assets:** Resolve any launch assets.

3. **Damage Control:** Roll for damage control on ships suffering from ongoing crippling damage results.

4. **Orbital Decay.** Resolve any orbital decay.

5. **Collect Victory Points**: Indicated by the scenario being played.

6. **Remove any excess dice and tokens from the table.**

Battlegroup Cards & the Strategy Deck

The order that ships activate in is dictated by the owning player's strategy deck and this deck is made up of Battlegroup cards. A Battlegroup card might represent just a lone, powerful ship but more commonly it will comprise several Groups of ships.

At the start of each turn both players build their own strategy deck out of their force's available Battlegroup cards, stacking them in the order they intend them to be activated in over the course of the coming turn.

A player's number of available Battlegroup cards are determined when they pick their fleet (see Building Your Fleet for more details). It can potentially be varied by circumstances like scenarios requiring reserve Battlegroups to be held off-table or casualties wiping out whole Battlegroups.

Strategy Rating

A Battlegroup card's Strategy Rating is used to determine which player's Battlegroup activates first. When the players reveal two opposing Battlegroup cards the Strategy Ratings on the cards are compared and the lower Strategy Rating can choose to activate before or after the Battlegroup with the higher Strategy Rating.

The Strategy Ratings for Battlegroup cards are determined by the Battlegroup's type and size, reflecting the fact that a small scouting group will be able to react more quickly than a heavy siege group. For details on making up your own Battlegroups see Building Your Fleet.

Equal Strategy Ratings

If two battlegroup cards are revealed which have the same Strategy Rating both players roll a D6 and add their Admiral Value (see Admirals for details), the player with the highest total chooses who goes first – If both players total is the same, roll again until one players total is higher.

Losing Battlegroups

When all of the ships in a Battlegroup have been destroyed or are off the table for any reason the corresponding Battlegroup card is removed from the player's strategy deck and put to one side. If you reveal a Battlegroup card that no longer has any ships remaining, remove it from your deck and reveal the next card.

Battlegroup Activation Sequence

When a Battlegroup's card is flipped all the groups in the Battlegroup proceed to activate one at a time in a sequence decided by the owning player. An active group must complete all of its moving, shooting and other actions before another group can activate.

It isn't necessary for a player to nominate the sequence of group activation before starting. Players choose the first group to activate, complete all of its actions, and then chose the next, in any order they like (as which they choose may be determined by a previous Group's successes or failures!). Once all of the groups in the Battlegroup have activated the Battlegroup's actions are over for that turn.

Ship's Orders

When activating any ships in a Battlegroup, the player may opt to use Standard Orders or one of many special orders. Generally a ship may turn, then move, then fire its weapons. A ship must do those in that order unless otherwise specified, although the amount of each depends on the order given.

Choose whether or not to have a ship on special orders before moving or shooting with it. Special orders are powerful abilities that allow greater tactical flexibility. Each comes with their own pros and cons, often trading usefulness for an increased visibility (see Spikes for more details).

All the ships in a battlegroup have to work together so only one 'special' order can be chosen each time the battlegroup activates. The individual ships in each of the battlegroup's groups can opt to use the battlegroup special order chosen for that turn or to use Standard Orders instead.

Ships outside their group cohesion range (see above) can only use standard orders.

Standard orders

Remove a Minor Spike from the ship at the beginning of its activation.

The ship may turn by up to 45 degrees at the **beginning** of its activation, and then must move between half and full its Thrust value. It may then fire up to one weapon system.

Special Orders

Weapons free

The ship may not turn, but must move between half and full its Thrust value. It may then fire any number of weapon systems. Add a Major Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Station Keeping

The ship may use from none to half of its Thrust value to move, turn by up to 45 degrees at the **beginning or end** of its movement and may then fire up to one weapon system. Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Course Change

The ship must move between half and full its Thrust value, and may turn up to 45 degrees **twice** at any point in its movement. It may then fire up to one weapon system. Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Max Thrust

The ship may turn up to 45 degrees at the beginning of its movement and then must move **between its full and double its Thrust value. It may not fire any weapon systems.** Add a Minor Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

A ship on Max Thrust may not use launch assets.

Silent Running

The ship may not turn, and must move between half and full its Thrust value. It may not fire any weapons systems. Remove all energy spikes from the ship at the end of its activation. **The ship's Signature is reduced to 0 until the start of its next activation.** Use the status wheel on the ship's base to indicate that it is silent running.

A ship on Silent Running may not use launch assets.

Active Scan

The ship may not turn, and must move between half and full its Thrust value. It may then fire up to one weapon system. Also place a Minor Spike on any one enemy ship on the tabletop. Add a Major Spike to the ship at the end of its activation.

Ships in Atmosphere and/or with less than 4 hull points on their starting profile may not use this order.

Only one ship per Group may use this order.

A ship using Active Scan can attempt to reveal a ship that is Silent Running, although success is by no means assured. Roll a die for the Active Scanning ship, on a 4+ the Silent Runner is spotted – reset the status wheel to show that its normal Signature applies. In this case no additional energy spike is added to the revealed ship although subsequent Active Scans or effects that add spikes will add the appropriate spike level.

Movement

A group does not have to maintain a specific formation when it moves and each ship can move individually. For a move to be legal all of the Group's ships must obey the coherency rules at the end of their movement.

Moving between orbital layers

A ship may move voluntarily up or down one orbital layer (e.g. from High Orbit to Low Orbit, or Atmosphere to Low Orbit) as a part of its movement, once per turn. However, it must be able to turn to do so. This means that ships that have **Weapons Free, Active Scan** or **Silent Running** special orders on them or ships that cannot turn for any other reason may **not** change Orbital Layers.

Ships may go down an Orbital Layer at any point in their movement for no penalty to their movement (other than those associated with going into Atmosphere - see the Atmosphere section for details). **A ship must expend 4" of its available Thrust to move up an Orbital Layer. A ship that does not have 4" of Thrust available may not move up a layer.**

Ramming

With the vast speeds involved in space travel, when two objects collide it mostly results in both objects being obliterated. With this in mind, even the most insane or bloodthirsty captains will avoid ramming their ship into another for risk of both being consumed in the inevitable explosion. However, in certain circumstances, when there is nothing else to loose, incredibly desperate captains have been known to rush dangerously close towards the enemy in the hopes of taking them with them. In such circumstances it is often the close range exchanges of weapon systems or the critical overloading of the ships jump drives that do the most damage, on rare occasions though the doomed ship will manage to make contact with their target, frequently consuming both in the destructive energies unleashed.

Only large ships have the mass to survive the desperate defensive fire thrown up by the enemy ship and as such, **only ships of medium tonnage or larger my attempt this manoeuvre.** As a captain must be desperate to attempt such an action his ship must abide by the following criteria:

- The ship must have two or fewer Hull Points remaining.
- The ship must choose Standard Orders this turn and may not fire.
- If the ship ends its activation within 3" of an enemy ship it may attempt to ram them.

Roll a dice. On a 1-2 the attempt has failed and the enemy ship succeeds in destroying the Ramming ship; remove the ship from play and do not roll for Catastrophic Damage. On the roll of a 3+ the Ramming action is a success and they have successfully crashed into/detonated their jump drives/unleashed a devastating final volley. Remove the Ramming ship and do not roll on the Catastrophic Damage table. The target ship takes a number of Lock 3+ hits equal to the Ramming ship's original Hull value.

Firing

Once a group has moved, all of its ships may fire weapon systems if their orders permit them to do so.

Firing Procedure

1. Check detection range and arc.
2. Allocate Attack dice.
3. Roll to hit.
4. Total up Hull damage inflicted.
5. Roll saving throws and deduct Hull points.
6. Roll for crippling damage if Hull is reduced to 50% or less.
7. Roll for catastrophic damage effects if Hull is reduced to 0 or less.

1. Check Detection Range and Firing Arc

In space combat few weapons really have a 'maximum range'. Take away the effects of atmosphere and gravity from the energy of a shot - whether from a kinetic striker or a thermal beam – and it will keep going for an almost infinite distance.

However ships still need to be able to accurately predict where enemies will be when the weapon's fire reaches them in order to plot their location and accurately fire on them.

What all this means is that when firing weapons in Dropfleet the Scan and Signature characteristics are used to determine a ship's effective range.

Attacker's Scan + Target's Signature = Weapon range for attacker.

The range a ship can 'see' a target at is equal to the target's Signature characteristic plus the firing ship's Scan characteristic.

If a target can be detected it can potentially be hit by the firing ship's weapon systems that can be brought to bear. Look at the weapon system's Arc characteristic in the firing ship's description and use the arcs on the base to check if it is within arc of any potential targets.

As orbital space is three dimensional, and because of the ability to see all other models as stated above, ships do not block each other from shooting other ships – this applies even if on the table top they may appear to be hiding behind each other or unable to actually 'see' the other ship.

Close Action weapons are short ranged, only using the attacker's Scan - see Weapon Special rules for more detail.

Energy Spikes

Certain events cause Energy Spikes to be placed on ships to mark their current status. Energy spikes represent all kinds of different events that assist the enemy in accurately targeting the ship – engine usage, weapons fire, even leaks caused by damage or enemy ships actively scanning for the vessel. Energy spikes come in two types: Minor and Major.

- **A Minor energy spike increases the ship's Signature characteristic by 6 until it is removed.**
- **A Major energy spike increases the ship's Signature characteristic by 12 until it is removed.**

A ship only has one Spike at a time. If a ship already has a Minor Spike and it gets a second one, it turns it into a Major Spike. If a ship already has a Major Spike token it is lit up like a proverbial Christmas tree and doesn't receive any further spikes until the Major Spike has been removed or reduced to a Minor Spike.

For example; A ship with a Signature of 6 gains a Minor Spike. Its Signature will count as 12 until the Spike is removed. If the ship gains another Minor Spike it becomes a Major Spike and the ship counts as Signature 18 until the Spike is removed.

Use the status wheel on a ship's base to track its energy spikes, turning the wheel as appropriate when spikes are gained or lost. Players may use a marker to represent these if they wish.

2. Allocate attack dice

The Attack number on a weapon profile is the number of dice that are rolled when that weapon is used.

Ships may only fire a single weapon system at a single target, they may not split their Attack dice over multiple targets. When rolling for several weapon systems with different characteristics at once it can be helpful to use different coloured dice to represent the different weapon systems instead of rolling each one separately.

Some weapon systems roll a random number of Attack Dice (i.e. D6 or D3) that is determined each time they shoot. Roll to see how many Attack Dice the weapon system generates before allocating them to available targets.

An active Group will usually contain multiple ships with weapon systems to fire. **All of a Group's Attack Dice must be allocated between the available targets before any rolls to hit are made.** This helps to speed up game play and prevents the firing player from excessively optimising their shooting in an unrealistic fashion.

Close Action weapons

Close Action weapon systems have a short effective range but they are fast firing and require small amounts of energy to use.

Close Action weapon systems can always be fired in addition to any other weapon systems permitted by a ship's orders. If a ship may not fire weapon systems it may not fire its close action weapon systems either.

3. ROLL TO HIT

Each weapon system has characteristics that specify its Lock number in the ship description. The Lock number is the number that has to be equalled or exceeded in order to score a hit.

CRITICAL HITS

Any Attack Dice which scores two or more higher than the weapon system's Lock number is considered to have scored a 'critical hit'. The Hull damage caused by that Attack Dice ignores the target's Armour saving throw altogether.

Passive Countermeasures can still attempt to save against critical hits using their additional Armour value (see below for more details).

For example, if a weapon system has a Lock roll of 4+ any Attack Dice that roll 6 will ignore the target's Armour saving throw and be applied directly to the target's Hull. A weapon system with a Lock roll of 3+ would ignore Armour saves on rolls of 5 or 6 and so on.

SHOOTING BETWEEN ORBITAL LAYERS

A ship firing from one Orbital Layer to another suffers a +1 penalty to its weapon's Lock value (i.e. 4+ Lock becomes 5+).

SHOOTING THROUGH ATMOSPHERE

The difficulty of shooting between Orbital Layers is compounded when shooting through Atmosphere, where firing anything from a laser to a mass driver becomes highly inaccurate as energy bleeds off and is lost, plasma disperses etc. Targeting and effectively damaging ships or cities in Atmosphere is roughly analogous to hitting an object at the bottom of a slime filled pond.

Unless a weapon system is specifically designed to attack such enemies, **any weapon system firing through (into or out of) Atmosphere has its lock value changed to 6+ regardless of any other modifiers.** In addition to this, **when firing through Atmosphere, detection range is limited to the firer's Scan value.** Signature and energy spikes are ignored.

Close Action weapons may not fire through Atmosphere.

Certain rules such as Bombardment and Air-to-Air override the penalties for shooting through orbital layers; these are covered in the special rules section or in individual ship entries.

BOMBARDMENT

Sometimes a ship's best course of action is to destroy the very planet it is fighting over. Ships may target Sectors just like any other target, but the following rules apply. See the Ground Combat section for more details on Sectors and Clusters.

Sectors can only be targeted by ships in Low Orbit and follow the normal rules for being in Atmosphere.

If a Sector receives any damage it takes saving throws against it just like a ship. Critical hits ignore the saving throw as usual, however as most weapons will have a Lock value of 6+ for targeting something in Atmosphere, you will need a specialist weapon to achieve a Critical hit. (i.e. a weapon with the Bombardment special rule). **You may only target a Sector with weapon systems if it does not contain any friendly Ground Assets.**

If a Sector takes a damage point and the Sector is occupied by Ground Assets then you must roll for collateral damage. Each point of damage will inflict one point of

damage on a Ground Asset in this sector (armour saving throws may be taken as normal - see Ground Assets for more details). The player that inflicted the damage chooses how to distribute this damage. One point of damage must be allocated to each Ground Asset before a second point may be allocated.

A Sector that loses all of its Hull points is turned into ruins. Any Ground Assets in the Sector when this happens are destroyed on a roll of 2+, to represent the apocalyptic devastation done to a wide area of the surface. This will also remove the Sector's value as a strategic objective. Ruins can still be bombarded to try and destroy ground assets, though they have no hull value so do not record this damage.

Nuke the site from orbit

All capital ships carry a small compliment of nuclear warheads for very specific circumstances.

In games of Dropfleet Commander you may find yourself in the position to launch one of these devastating attacks against a Sector, however be warned, you might suffer a reduction in your victory point total for destroying valuable infrastructure (see the Scenarios section for more details).

Only ships of **Medium, Heavy or Super Heavy** tonnage value may launch a nuclear missile and there are a number of conditions you must satisfy in order to pull off this devastating attack:

- You must be on an order that allows you to fire a weapon system this turn.
- You must be in low orbit and in scan range of the Sector you wish to destroy.

- A ship may only launch 1 nuclear attack per turn (this is in addition to any other shooting you may normally be allowed to do).
- You may not target a Sector which contains friendly Ground Assets.
- No enemy ships are within 12" of the Sector you are targeting.

If the nuclear missile is launched, the Sector is destroyed on a roll of 2+. If destroyed, any ground assets there are removed from play. There are not even meaningful ruins remaining! **Each other Sector in the Cluster also suffers 1 damage** if the target Sector was destroyed (saves may be taken as normal).

4. Total up Hull damage inflicted

Every Attack Dice that equals or exceeds its Lock number inflicts the number of Damage points indicated for the weapon system. Commonly this is one point of Hull damage per Attack Dice but particularly destructive weapons may inflict more.

Some weapon system are unpredictable and will inflict a variable number of damage points on each hit scored (e.g. D6, D6+1 etc.). Roll any additional dice needed to determine the actual amount of damage inflicted before any Armour saving throws are made.

For example; A ship's description includes a rail gun battery with a Lock of 4+, 3 Attack and 1 Damage. This means that when the weapon system is fired three dice are rolled and each one scores a hit on roll of 4, 5 or 6. Each hit scored by the rail gun battery inflicts 1 Hull damage on the target.

5. Roll Armour saving throws and deduct Hull points

When a ship suffers Hull damage its Passive countermeasures (if it has any) and Armour may be able to prevent the damage being applied.

Roll a D6 for each point of Hull damage inflicted and compare it to the Armour saving throw shown in the ship's description. Any D6 that scores equal to or above the ship's indicated saving throw for Armour blocks one point of damage so that it has no effect.

When a ship has more than one saving throw, players choose the best applicable save and compare their roll to this.

Any unsaved damage will remove Hull points from the target ship. Track the Hull damage lost by ships by using the damage wheel on the model's base, counters or dice. Ships that have no Hull points left are destroyed and must roll for catastrophic damage to see how fiery their demise is.

Passive countermeasures

Some advanced ships have additional 'passive' countermeasures like energy shields, ablative clouds and force fields to protect their ships in addition to regular armour.

Passive countermeasures are shown by an additional Armour characteristic (e.g. 3+/4+ indicating a Passive Countermeasure save of 4+). Passive countermeasures are highly effective because they give a ship protection against critical hits which would otherwise punch through armour completely.

The downside to passive countermeasures is that they often increase a ship's Signature and may prevent it using its Point Defence while they're operational – any negatives are covered in the ship's specific information, or in faction specific rules (e.g. for the Shaltari)

When a ship has more than one saving throw, players choose the best applicable save and compare their roll to this.

e.g. A ship has a 3+/4+ save. It receives five hits – three are normal hits, and the remaining two are critical hits. The ship's owner rolls three dice needing 3+ for the normal hits, as this is their best save. They cannot take normal saves against the critical hits, but may take Passive Countermeasure saves, so they roll the remaining two save needing 4+, as this is the best save they can take against these hits.

Shields up!

Passive Countermeasures work in a variety of different ways for different races. Some are all encompassing energy bubbles that offer staunch defence against all attacks, while others are only in use to protect certain key areas of a ship, making them less effective overall.

Some (usually the less powerful) Passive Countermeasures may be constantly in use, whereas very strong versions require the player to choice to deploy them or not (as they will often have negative tactics effects as well).

Players must choose to raise shields at the same time that special orders are chosen for a Battlegroup. Each ship can opt to use Passive Countermeasures or not, and if used they will remain operative until the ship's next activation in the following turn. Mark ships using Passive Countermeasures with tokens. Keep in mind that raising shields will often have negative tactical effects as well as the positives of Passive Countermeasures.

Point Defence (PD)

Ships usually have their Point Defence as another line of defence to specifically protect them against damage inflicted by **Launch Assets and Close Action weapon systems.**

When a ship receives damage from these sources roll a number of dice equal to the ship's PD characteristic. **Each Point Defence dice that succeeds in scoring a 5 or 6 will block one point of Hull Damage before Armour saves are taken.**

Critical hits **can** be stopped by Point Defence but each point of critical hit damage blocked takes **two** Point Defence successes instead of one.

For example; A cruiser with a PD characteristic of 6 is attacked and suffers four normal points of Hull damage and two points of critical Hull damage from Close Action weapon systems. Rolling six dice for Point Defence it gets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. – two successes. The ship's Point Defence can stop two points of ordinary Hull damage or one of the points of critical Hull damage.

6. Roll for Crippling Damage

When a ship has lost a cumulative total of more 50% or more of its starting Hull points it suffers Crippling Damage. This is a one-time check to represent major systems taking too much punishment, minor systems shorting out and continuous battle damage taking its toll on the vessel.

When a ship experiences Crippling Damage, roll a D6 and consult the table on the following page to see where the Crippling Damage has occurred, and then roll a second D6 on the appropriate sub-table to discover the result.

Ships with a starting hull value of less than 4 are never subject to being Crippled and do not roll on the on the Crippling Damage table.

Extra damage results and Armour saving throws

Many Crippling Damage results inflict additional Hull damage on the ship. Armour saving throws never apply against Crippling Damage as it represents the ship suffering internal collapses, cascade failures and systems quite literally melting down. It's worth noting that smaller ships like frigates are quite likely to be destroyed outright by Crippling Damage.

7. Roll for Catastrophic Damage

When a ship has no Hull points remaining it is destroyed by Catastrophic Damage. Roll a D6 on the table on the following page to see if its destruction has any additional effects that apply to other ships nearby. **Larger ships tend to go with a bigger bang so add +1 to the roll if the Ship had a starting Hull characteristic of 10 or more.** Ships with a starting hull value of less than 4 are simply removed from play-do not roll on this table.

Most Catastrophic Damage results can cause a ship to explode in some fashion. **The size of the explosion is determined by the starting Hull size of the ship.**

- Ships with a Hull characteristic of 6 or less explode with a D3"radius.
- Ships with a Hull characteristic of 7 or more explode with a D6" radius.

Note that the explosion only ever effects ships on the **same Orbital Layer** as the destroyed ship. **Ships in Atmosphere are simply removed from play – do not roll on this table.**

CRIPPLING DAMAGE TABLE					
1st roll	2nd roll	Extra Hull Damage	Repair?	Orbital Decay	Result on ship
1-2 Subsystems	1-2	0	No	No	**BRIGHT FLASH... AND NOTHING ELSE:** Gains a Minor Spike. If using Silent Running special orders, Signature is returned to normal instead.
1-2 Subsystems	3-4	0	Yes	No	**FIRE:** Inflicts 1 additional point of Hull damage in each Roundup phase.
1-2 Subsystems	5-6	2	Yes	Yes	**ENERGY SURGES:** May not use special orders.
3-4 Hull	1-2	0	Yes	No	**SCANNERS OFFLINE:** Scan reduced to 1".
3-4 Hull	3-4	2	No	No	**ARMOUR CRACKED:** Armour value suffers +2 modifier for the rest of the game.
3-4 Hull	5-6	2	No	Yes	**HULL BREACH:** No additional effect.
5-6 Core Systems	1-2	2	Yes	Yes	**ENGINES DISABLED:** Thrust reduced by 50% (rounded up), and may not turn or change orbit.
5-6 Core Systems	3-4	3	No	No	**WEAPONS OFFLINE:** The next time it activates it may not fire any weapons or use any launch assets. In subsequent activations it may fire and launch assets as normal.
5-6 Core Systems	5-6	3	No	Yes	**REACTOR OVERLOAD:** Roll again on the Crippling Damage Table.

CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE TABLE	
D6 roll	Result to all ships in explosion range
1-2	**BURN UP:** No additional effect.
3	**BLAZING WRECK:** Gain a Minor Spike. If using Silent Running special orders, Signature is returned to normal instead.
4	**SHREDDED:** Suffer 1 point of Hull damage. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may be used as normal.
5	**EXPLOSION:** Suffer 2 points of Hull damage. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may be used as normal.
6	**RADIATION BURST:** Suffer 2 points of Hull damage. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may not be used.
7+	**DISTORTION BUBBLE:** Suffer D6 points of Hull damage. Armour and Passive Countermeasures may not be used.

DAMAGE CONTROL

Roll a D6 for each crippling damage effect that requires repair **in the Roundup Phase of the game turn.** Armour and Passive Countermeasures cannot prevent Hull damage from this source.

D6 ROLL	RESULT
DAMAGE CONTROL TABLE	
1-2	The ship suffers one point of Hull damage (no saves) and the Crippling Damage is not repaired. Roll again for repair at the end of the next game turn
3	Crippling Damage is not repaired. Roll again for repair at the end of the next game turn.
4+	The Crippling Damage is repaired and has no further effect.

ORBITAL DECAY

Several Crippling Damage results make a ship subject to Orbital Decay. Its gravity nullifiers have ceased working, and it has started to plummet down to the planet.

Orbital Decay is an additional crippling damage effect that causes the ship move down one Orbital layer in the Roundup Phase. It may be rolled for as part of Damage Control in the Roundup Phase.

Any ship that does not have the Atmospheric Rule that moves into atmosphere because of Orbital Decay is Destroyed – remove it from play without rolling on the Catastrophic damage table.

Ground Combat

Although much of Dropfleet Commander focuses on the fighting in orbit, most objectives and key points being fought over are actually on the planet's surface. Ground to space combat is a tricky business because the combined effects of a planet's gravity well and atmosphere place a thick 'veil' between the two battlefields. Often a fleet's primary purposes will be to escort strike carriers and mother ships capable of sending invasion forces down to strategic objectives on the surface, or else to bombard those same objectives into oblivion.

Clusters & Sectors

While the fleet battles are unfolding in orbit, the often more critical battles are unfolding on the planet's surface with legions of troops engaged in gruelling battles for control over the planet's key strategic points. In game terms these strategic points are called 'Clusters' and they are made up of several 'Sectors'.

Clusters

A Cluster is a predetermined area of the game map and will usually contain between 2 and 5 Sectors of varying significance. A Cluster has a marked centre point and this is used both when placing the cluster on the battlefield during set-up but also when any scenario or rule requires you to be 'in range' of a Cluster.

Sectors

Sectors are the strategically important areas of a Cluster and are usually the areas where Ground Assets are deployed to defend them against your opponents! There are 6 types of Sectors in the game. Clusters can be made up of any combination of these although the scenarios will normally show you which ones to use.

If a scenario or special rule requires you to be in range of a Sector (as opposed to in range of a Cluster), then measure to the nearest edge of the Sector Token. These sectors have damage points and rules which are detailed in the Scenarios section.

Space Stations in Planetary Combat

Space Stations are very large and require substantial Ground Assets to control. They are treated as a single Sector for the purposes of resolving combat. Infantry, Armour and Batteries may be deployed to the Space Station in the same way as to a Sector in a Cluster. The player with the most Ground Asset tokens on a Space Station at the end of the Ground Asset Phase is the Controlling Player. In the event of a tie, no player controls the Space Station. See the Space Station section for more details on using them in your games.

Ground Assets

Ground assets are units on a planet's surface that fight over things worth defending, capturing or blowing up depending on your perspective. They can be anything from regiments of soldiers to formations of tanks to emplaced weapon systems. Ground assets normally can't shoot at ships or influence the orbital battle directly, but they are vital for securing strategic objectives on the surface.

Ground Assets are usually deployed to the surface by Dropships or Bulk Landers (see Launch Assets for more details).

Ground assets are broken up into the following 3 categories: Infantry, Armour and Batteries. In game, these are normally represented by tokens. Each of these Ground Assets have their own rules and abilities.

Ground Asset	Armour	Attack
Infantry	5+/3+	1
Armour	3+/5+	3
Defence Battery	3+/3+	0

- **Armour:** Again just like ships this shows the chance to avoid taking damage. Where there are 2 armour values, for example 5+/3+, the first is their saving throw from damage caused by combat with enemy units and the second is their save from damage caused by bombardment. (note they all have 1 hull effectively, so a single point of Hull Damage will destroy them).
- **Attack:** The number of dice the unit rolls when in combat with other Ground Assets.

Defence Batteries

These giant defence bastions provide the defending forces with the ability to destroy incoming enemy Dropships and Bulk Landers but are vulnerable to attack from the ground.

If there are no friendly Infantry or Armoured tokens in their sector at the end of the Round Up Phase **and** one or more enemy Armour or Infantry tokens is in the same sector, then the Battery is removed from play.

If an enemy tries to land Ground Assets (see Dropships and Bulk Landers) in a Cluster or Space Station that contains one or more Batteries roll 1D6 for each Asset.

On the roll of a 3+ it is destroyed and no token is placed. If the Asset is deployed by Dropships, then it is only destroyed on the roll of a 5+.

Once deployed, Defence Batteries may not move or redeploy between Sectors.

Ground Assets Activation

Ground Assets are activated during the Ground Combat segment of the Roundup Phase.

First of all, each player rolls 1D6 and adds the Admiral Value of their Admiral. Players with the same score repeat this until an order of Initiative is established.

If only one player rolls a 6, they win Initiative, regardless of Admiral Value.

Movement

The player with the highest Initiative selects a Cluster and moves any number of Ground Asset tokens into any other Sector in that Cluster. However, if enemy Infantry or Armour tokens are already in a Sector containing friendly tokens, you can't move tokens from that Sector.

Once the tokens are moved, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose a Cluster they have not selected this turn and move Ground Assets. Repeat this until every player has moved any Ground Assets in that Cluster they wish to, before the player with the highest Initiative selects another Cluster and the process repeats until all Clusters have been selected.

Resolve Combats

1. The player with the highest Initiative selects a Cluster and a Sector within that Cluster. All players total up the attack value of friendly tokens in the Sector.

2. Each player rolls a number of dice equal to the combined attack value of their tokens. Every result of a 4+ causes 1 point of damage to an enemy Ground Asset token in the same Sector (note that Critical Hits are not inflicted in Ground Combat). Each player then allocates each point of damage they have caused to an enemy token. One point of damage must be allocated to every enemy token before a second point may be allocated.

3. Once all damage has been allocated each player must roll for any saves on their tokens, removing any that fail their saves as casualties.

4. Return to step 1 and pick another Sector to resolve. Keep picking Sectors until every Sector containing friendly and enemy ground assets has been resolved.

Launch Assets

Ships may carry smaller subordinate craft on board in the form of strike craft like Dropships, Fighters and Bombers or munitions – ship-killing Torpedoes and similar systems. Collectively these are called **Launch Assets** in Dropfleet and they all operate using the same game rules. Launch Assets are represented by tokens on the tabletop – either flat counters or bases with teeny tiny models on them.

An individual Launch Asset token represents a flight of Fighters/Bombers or a group of Torpedoes. Standard sizes for Strike Craft and munitions markers are the 20mm x 20mm tokens supplied. Note that Dropships and Bulk Landers do not have tokens as they resolve instantly and do not spend any time on the table.

In the rules that follow all models that can deploy Launch Assets are referred to as 'carriers'. A carrier will most likely be a ship in practice, but it could be a ground-based airfield, orbital dock or other launch facility. In such cases these are still counted as 'carriers' for rules purposes when it comes to Launch Assets.

Carrier Characteristics

Each Carrier has characteristics for its Launch Capability. An example of which is below:

Load	Launch	Special
Torpedoes	1	-
Fighters & Bombers	6	-

- **Load:** The type of launch assets the carrier can use. There may be a choice of different types but the carrier is still limited by its overall capacity and launch ability.
- **Launch:** How many tokens the carrier can launch in one turn.

Type	Thrust	Lock	Attack	Damage
UCM Bomber	12"	3+	2	1
UCM Torpedo	9"	2+	1	6

Type	Thrust	Point Defence Bonus	
UCM Fighter	20"	+3	
UCM Dropship	3"	-	

Launch Asset Characteristics

Launch Assets often work similarly to a weapon profile, although some have their own unique rules. Some examples are shown below.

- **Thrust:** The maximum distance it can travel to reach its target in a single phase.
- **Lock, Attack, Damage & Special:** All function identically to weapon system characteristics.
- **Point Defence Bonus:** Extra PD added to a ship these are used on.

Launching Assets

Carriers have the opportunity to use their Launch Assets during the Roundup phase after Ground Combat has been resolved.

Use the same Initiative values determined in the Ground Combat segment. Use the same rules for determining them if you have not done so already.

Each turn players should complete each stage below in order of Initiative before moving onto the next phase.

This step is always resolved in the following order:

1. **Torpedoes**
2. **Bombers**
3. **Fighters**
4. **Dropships & Bulk Landers**

The player with the highest Initiative selects a Group with which to launch. They place all tokens they wish to launch from this Group next to the ship(s) or Sectors they are targeting.

Once the tokens are placed, the player with the next lowest Initiative may choose to launch those assets from a Group that has not launched yet this turn.

Repeat this until every player has launched that asset, then move onto the next asset.

A ship that launches any Launch Assets gains a Minor Spike.

Note: If you choose to activate a Ship Group it must launch something, you may not choose not to launch anything as a way to make your opponent reveal their plans!

Time To Target

Launch Assets have to travel to their target and may even have to spend some time hunting for it, space is big, they are small and their sensor gear is limited in comparison to that of a ship. The time to target depends on the range from the launching carrier to the target:

- If the target is **within the asset's Thrust** it's a quick sprint and the Launch Asset takes effect this turn.

- If the target is **more than its Thrust but within double its Thrust** a longer journey is necessary and there is a slight delay before the launch assets arrive. Place the launch assets in

contact with the target's base (or with each other if there is no more room left around the base), they will take effect at the end of the target's activation in the next game turn. **Dropships and Bulk Landers cannot use this option, and must launch to a target within their Thrust.**

Note that Launch Assets can be used against targets that are outside the normal Scan + Signature range, and ignore scenery on their way to their target.

Launch Assets in Orbital Combat

Launch Assets are limited to operating in certain Orbital Layers. The configuration and design specifications required for operating in atmosphere are very different to those needed in high orbit. As such the following limitations apply:

- **Dropships:** May operate in Atmosphere only or Low Orbit if they are launching against a Space Station within 3".

- **Bulk Landers:** May operate in Atmosphere and Low Orbit only.

- **All other Launch Assets:** May operate in Low and High Orbit only. Other Launch Assets originating from surface-based carriers deploy into and operate in Low and High Orbit only.

If a ship with Launch Assets in contact with it enters Atmosphere, the Launch Assets are removed from play as they either burn up or return to their carrier.

Launch Asset Effects

Once all the Groups containing Launch Assets have deployed their assets, you must then resolve their effects.

Firstly, place any ground tokens from Dropships and Bulk Landers. Next, starting with the player with the highest Initiative, select 1 enemy ship to resolve the effects of any tokens against it. Then the player with the next highest Initiative selects 1 enemy ship to resolve and so on until all the of the launch asset tokens have been resolved.

Launch assets generally function like a special kind of weapon system, but because of their unique properties there's some special rules that apply to them.

Much like Close Action weapons, Launch Assets do not count against the number of weapon systems the ship may fire during a turn due to special orders, but likewise **if the carrier can't fire for any reason it cannot use Launch Assets**.

The effects of a Launch Asset depend on its type and what it's in contact with.

Once a launch asset has taken effect the token is removed immediately.

Fighters

Fighters are lightweight, agile craft intended as dedicated interceptors of opposing Strike Craft and Close Action weapons. Fighters serve an interceptor role for ships by flying in close support and improving a friendly unit's Point Defence.

Fighters lack the firepower necessary to make a dent on larger enemies so in Dropfleet they are limited to a purely defensive role.

Fighter tokens can take effect at various times throughout the game.

Fighters may take effect from when they are placed onwards, even if launched using twice their thrust range.

Fighters can be launched against friendly or enemy ships, and their rules change depending on their target:

Friendly Ships: Add bonus dice to their PD characteristic against a single attack from Launch Assets or Close Action weapons. The owning player must decide whether or not to expend the fighters against an attack once the damage is known but before PD dice are rolled. If the protected unit moves the fighter marker is moved with it.

Once the Fighter marker has taken effect it returns to its carrier and is removed from play. Any Fighters which have not taken effect by the following Roundup Phase are removed as they are forced to fly back and refuel.

For example: 4 UCM Fighters are launched to protect a friendly target. The target gains +12 PD and the Fighters stay with it until the owning player chooses to use the Fighters to supplement its Point Defence against an attack from Launch Assets or Close Action weapons. The owning player can choose to add some, all or none of the escorting Fighter markers to its defence when attacked, gaining +3PD for each.

Enemy Ships: Remove one enemy Fighter token from this ship (they keep each other occupied in dogfighting!) This may only be done when resolving launch asset effects (during the roundup phase) just before Bombers take effect.

Bombers

Bombers are Strike Craft that carry serious ship-killing weaponry, typically deploying a mixture of stand-off missiles and one-shot, high-intensity energy weapons.

Bombers make an attack with their profile when arriving at an enemy ship.

When Bombers from multiple sources attack the same target they coordinate their run to overwhelm its Point Defence. Roll all of the Bomber's attacks together when they take effect and treat it as a single attack versus the target's Point Defence so the defender only rolls for PD once for the ship instead of against each token's attack separately.

For example: 6 Bomber tokens launched from 2 carriers attack an enemy ship together. Each Bomber makes 2 attacks normally, but in this case they make a coordinated attack and roll all 12 attacks at once. The enemy ship's Point Defence will only roll once against the massed attack instead of separately against each Bomber.

Dropships

Dropships are transporters used for rapidly deploying armoured forces down to a planet's surface. They are agile, well armoured and armed for their size to weather the storm of defensive fire they invariably attract.

Dropships may only be launched by carriers that are in Atmosphere or Low Orbit if targeting a Space Station.

Dropships may target Ground Sectors or Space Stations within their Thrust. When they do, they deliver one Armour or Infantry token to the Sector or Space Station.

Bulk lander

Bulk landers are large, lightly armoured landing craft used by troopships to deploy large numbers of ground troops or anti-ship weapon emplacements. Bulk Landers are considerably slower and more vulnerable than Dropships, as they are not designed for 1st wave assaults on entrenched positions, but rather as occupying or reinforcing troops once a beachhead is secured.

Bulk landers may only be launched by carriers that are in Low Orbit or Atmosphere.

Bulk Landers may target Ground Sectors or Space Stations within their Thrust. When they do, they deliver three Infantry tokens or one Defence Battery token to the Sector or Space Station.

A Note on Dropships & Bulk Landers

Since there is no actual game time between the deployment and landing of the Dropship or Bulk Lander tokens there is no need to physically place them.

For speed of play and ease of use, most players will find it easier to declare where they are deploying troops, resolve any ground fire from Batteries and then directly place the Infantry or Armour tokens without using a Dropship or Bulk Lander token.

Torpedoes

Torpedoes are very large, ship-killing missiles that are much more dangerous than the types ordinarily categorised as Close Action weapons. Torpedoes are heavily armoured and well protected against opposing Point Defences with decoys and jamming to ensure they will get close enough to the target to deliver a potentially devastating hit.

The relatively slow acceleration of Torpedoes means they **never attack immediately even if the target is within their Thrust range,** instead place the Torpedo in contact with the target and execute the attack at the **end of the target's next activation.**

Torpedoes make an attack with their profile when arriving at an enemy ship. Point Defence has no effect against damage inflicted by Torpedoes.

Manoeuvre

A ship which activates when it has Launch Assets in contact with its base can use hard manoeuvring to try and 'shake off' the Launch Assets and spoil their attack run. If the ship uses **Course Change or Max Thrust** special orders roll a D6 for each enemy Launch Asset targeting the ship. On a roll of 5+ the Launch Asset is shaken off and removed. On a roll of 1-4 the Launch Asset doggedly pursues and takes effect at the end of the target's activation as normal.

Outmanoeuvring Torpedoes

Torpedoes are relentless in their pursuit of a target and not so easy to shake off. Only remove a Torpedo marker if a 6 is rolled, on a 1-5 the Torpedo does not attack this turn but instead remains in contact with the target ship's base ready to attack again after the target's next activation.

BOMBERS					
Type	Thrust	Lock	Attack	Damage	Special
UCM	12"	3+	2	1	-
Scourge	15"	3+	2	1	Scald
PHR	12"	2+	2	1	-
Shaltari	15"	3+	2	1	-
Resistance	12"	4+	3	1	-

TORPEDOES					
Type	Thrust	Lock	Attack	Damage	Special
UCM	9"	2+	1	6	-
Scourge	9"	2+	1	4	Corruptor
PHR	9"	2+	1	6	-
Shaltari	-	-	-	-	-
Resistance	12"	2+	6	1	-

FIGHTERS		
Type	Thrust	PD Bonus
UCM	20"	+3
Scourge	24"	+3
PHR	20"	+4
Shaltari	24"	+4
Resistance	20"	+5

DROPSHIPS/BULK LANDERS	
Type	Thrust
UCM	3"/6"
Scourge	3"/6"
PHR	3"/6"
Shaltari	3"/6"
Resistance	3"/6"

Building Your Fleet

Game Size

Battlegroups in Dropfleet Commander are determined by the size of game chosen and the individual forces that players choose. There are three sizes of game; Skirmish, Clash and Battle. These indicate small, medium and large sized games, and give players restrictions on group numbers and ship types.

- **Skirmish:** 500-999 points
- **Clash:** 1000-1999 points
- **Battle:** 2000-3000 points

As the game size increases, the number of Battlegroups permitted is capped. This means that larger games will not have many more activations per turn than smaller ones, making it more practical to fight epic engagements. If you want to play a truly vast battle, you may use two or more Fleet Rosters split into these categories (although by using the lowest number of points possible). For example, if you want to play a 6000 point game. You can use two 'Battle' Fleet Rosters, but not six 'Skirmish' Fleet Rosters.

The Fleet Roster

Each ship has a Tonnage value as explained in the Ship Characteristics section. Players should compare that with the battlegroup types below and it will show how many of each group of that tonnage may be in each battlegroup. The large table (known as the Fleet Roster) will then show how many of each Battlegroup may be chosen for each game size. Unless otherwise stated, a single Battlegroup may not come to more than 33% of your army's total allowed points cost for Clashes and Battles, and 50% for skirmishes. This does not include the points cost of your Admiral.

Game Size	Battlegroup Type					Launch Capacity
	Pathfinder	Line	Vanguard	Flag	Max	
Skirmish (500-999 pts)	0-2	1-2	0-1	0	4	10
Clash (1000-1999 pts)	1-2	1-3	0-2	0-1	6	15
Battle (2000-3000 pts)	1-3	1-4	0-3	0-2	7	20

Pathfinder Battlegroup	
Light	1-3
Medium	0-1
Max	3

Line Battlegroup	
Light	0-2
Medium	1-3
Max	3

Vanguard Battlegroup	
Light	0-1
Medium	0-1
Heavy	1-2
Max	3

Flag Battlegroup	
Light	0-1
Super Heavy	1-2
Max	3

Launch Capacity

Fighters, Bombers and Torpedoes are expensive resources and as such fleets only have a limited supply of them. This is represented in game by a Launch Capacity Cap and you may not have more **total Launch Capacity** for Fighters, Bombers and Torpedoes in your fleet than shown in the Fleet Roster above.

Strategy Rating

Once you have built your fleet, you will need to determine your Strategy Rating for each Battlegroup in your fleet. To determine the Strategy Rating of each Battlegroup simply total up the Tonnage Value of each ship in the Battlegroup using the table below.

Tonnage	Tonnage Value
Light	1
Medium	5
Heavy	10
Super Heavy	15

Scenarios

Preparing For Battle

After choosing a game size and preparing your fleet, you must choose a scenario. In war, the simple destruction of the enemy is often not the main goal of a particular tactical operation. Perhaps critical geosynchronous orbits must be captured to support ground invasions, enemy held cities might need to be razed from orbit etc. In futuristic warfare, many of these objectives are time critical, necessitating rapid deployment, insertion and support for your ground forces. A selection of scenarios are provided in this book, and many more will appear in the future. Every Scenario will outline the following to define the rules of the game:

- **Battlefield Layout:** An outline of the scenery and battlefield required. This will usually be quite loose, allowing you to play the same scenario in wildly different conditions. However, some will require specific features such as space stations.
- **Number of players:** Some scenarios will only work with two sides and will require an even number of players (when there is a clear attacking side and defending side for example). Others will allow any number of players, sometimes all vying against each other.
- **Fleet Roster:** In most scenarios, this section will simply state that the Standard Fleet Roster should be used. However, certain special scenarios will dictate more unconventional fleets, and will be accompanied by a special Fleet Roster chart which may replace the standard one or be permitted as an alternative.

- **Approach Type:** Each scenario will define where and how each fleet may deploy on the battlefield.
- **Number of Turns:** Games are played out as a number of turns. Each scenario will state how many of these there will be before the game ends.
- **Victory Conditions:** Each Scenario will state what each player must do to secure victory. This will vary enormously between scenarios and will strongly dictate how the battle is played.

Approach Type

At the beginning of an engagement fleets approach the Battlefield in different ways. Which of these will be used will depend on the scenario.

- **Directly Deployed:** Directly Deployed Battlegroups begin the game on the table and within 6" of a friendly board edge. Some special Scenarios may define an additional Deployment Zone where ships may be placed.
- **Battleline:** All Battlegroups begin the game off the table but can be activated in the same way as a Battlegroup already on the table.
- **Column:** The fleet is approaching the battlefield in a drawn out formation and will not all arrive at once. All Battlegroups begin the game off the table. On turn 1, two Battlegroups of your choice must be activated and move on. On turn 2, two more Battlegroups must be activated and move on. On turn 3, all remaining Battlegroups must be activated and move on.

- **Distant:** The fleet cautiously approaches the battlefield, with lighter battlegroups arriving first. On turn 1, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 1-9 must be activated and move on. On turn 2, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 10-14 must be activated and move on. On 3, all Battlegroups with a Tonnage value of 15 and above must be activated and move on.

- **Rapid Response:** The fleet has been forced to respond to a developing threat on the fly. On turn 1, one Battlegroup of your choice must activate and move on. On turn 2, each remaining Battlegroup must be activated and move on on a roll of 4+ (roll separately for each Battlegroup). On turn 3, each remaining Battlegroup must be activated and moved on on a roll of 2+ (roll separately for each Battlegroup). On turn 4, all remaining Battlegroups must be activated and moved on.

Activating Battlegroups not on the table

When a Battlegroup not on the table is activated, it must be moved onto the table from any friendly edge. Groups entering the table this way start in High Orbit (although they may change Orbital layer as normal during their turn) and may be given Orders.

Scenario Objectives

While securing a planet's orbital lanes is key to gaining victory, controlling the ground is equally important. Vast swathes of the landscape are worthless, at least in the initial stages of the invasion, however, manufacturing, population and military sectors all provide an invading force resources they can use straight away from

new recruits to logistical and military supplies. Capturing these areas is no less important than having orbital dominance and in games of Dropfleet Commander, controlling clusters and sectors is frequently the key to victory.

Clusters

Clusters are large urbanised areas on a planet's surface. Typically, they consist of a range of regions from commercial and manufacturing through to civilian districts and military enclaves. Control of these vast areas of manufacturing, military and civilian infrastructure are vital to controlling the planet. Clusters are made up of a number of sectors and controlling these key locations is critical to controlling the Cluster.

Some Scenarios will require you to Hold or Contest a Cluster in order to score Victory Points (VPs) in the game.

- To **hold** a Cluster, you must hold more value in terms of Sectors in that Cluster than your opponent, or more Sectors overall if they are not given a set value in that scenario.

- To **contest** a Cluster, you must hold 1 or more Sectors in that Cluster.

Players score VPs for holding and/or contesting Clusters at the end of the Roundup Phase on turns 4 and 6 unless the scenario defines otherwise.

Clusters come in three sizes, each containing a different number of Sectors, and scoring different VPs, although some scenarios may specify different amounts.

Cluster	Sectors	Hold	Contest
Small	2	2VP	0VP
Medium	3	3VP	1VP
Large	4	4VP	2VP

Sectors

Sectors are the key locations in Clusters that you must secure with ground forces in order to capture and defend their strategic advantage from your opponent! There are 6 types of sectors in the game and you will be required to hold various combinations of these depending on the mission.

In order to hold a Sector, you must have more infantry/armoured tokens in that sector than your opponent at the end of the scoring turn, as described in the scenario. If you are required to contest a Sector, you must have 1 or more infantry or armoured tokens in that sector at the end of the of the scoring turn, as described in the scenario.

Each Sector has a value and the player that controls the highest total value of Sectors controls that Cluster.

	Sector	Hull	Armour	Value	Special
🔵	Commercial	8	4+	1	-
🟡	Industrial	4	4+	2	-
🟤	Military	4	3+	1	Defence Weapons
🟢	Orbital Defence	6	3+	1	Orbital Gun
🟠	Power Plant	6	4+	4	Volatile
🩷	Comms Station	4	5+	1	Scanner Uplink
	Cluster (of Sectors)		Moon (LSO)		
	Clusters for Clash and Battle sized games				
	Space Station				
	Space Station for Clash and Battle sizes games				

Sector Special Rules

Some Sectors have special rules which bring additional benefits or risks to the holder.

Defence Weapons

This militarised sector has weapons powerful enough to damage ships in orbit. At the beginning of the Ground Combat step, the holder of this Sector may fire the following weapon against a ship in range with the following profile. Range is measured from the centre of the Cluster and all Clusters count as having a Scan of 6".

Type	Lock	Attack	Damage	Arc	Special
Defence Weapons	3+	2	1	F/S/R	Escape Velocity

Orbital Gun

This represents surface based weapons designed to do terrible damage to orbiting ships. At the beginning of the Ground Combat step, the holder of this Sector may fire the following weapon against a ship in range with the following profile. Range is measured from the centre of the Cluster and all Clusters count as having a Scan of 6".

Type	Lock	Attack	Damage	Arc	Special
Orbital Gun	2+	1	2	F/S/R	Escape Velocity

Volatile

Destruction of this power plant will result in a catastrophic meltdown! If this Sector is destroyed, all other Sectors in the Cluster take 4 damage (saves may be taken against this damage as normal).

Scanner Uplink

This is the nexus for a network of orbiting and ground based scanners. All ships and other assets controlled by the holder gain +3" to their Scan Value. This effect is cumulative if you control multiple Sectors with this rule.

Other Scoring Methods

Most Scenarios have multiple ways of scoring victory points beyond holding Clusters.

Critical Locations

Critical locations are key parts of the battlefield that you must control or contest with your ships in order to give your ground forces a fighting chance. However, some ships are better at controlling space than others. In order to hold a Critical Location, you must have more Tonnage Value *within 6 inches of it* and *in low orbit* than your opponent at the end of a specific game turn, as outlined in the scenario.

The player holding a Critical Location scores 2VP at the end of the Roundup Phase on turns 4 and 6 unless the scenario defines otherwise.

Surveying a Cluster

To survey a cluster, a ship must be in low orbit, within 6" of the centre point of the cluster and be on standard orders that turn. This happens at the end of a ship's movement. Only one ship per battlegroup of Tonnage 5 or more may survey a cluster per turn. You may not survey a cluster in turn 1.

When surveying a cluster roll 1 dice, on a roll of 1-4 you gain 1vp, on a roll of a 5+ you score 1 VP and the cluster becomes a critical location. You may only survey a cluster once per game but both sides may survey the same cluster over the course of a game. Once a critical location has been rolled for a cluster then an opponent that surveys the same cluster will automatically receive 1 VP – it does not become a second critical location!

Destroying a Cluster

Some Scenarios will require the demolition of Clusters! A Cluster counts as destroyed if all Sectors in a Cluster are reduced to Ruins.

Space Stations in Scenarios

Space Stations are sometimes included in Scenarios and are worth VP in various ways. If a mission requires a Space Station to be held, the holding player is the one with the most Ground Assets aboard.

VPs may be awarded for destroying or surveying Space Stations - use the same rules as for Clusters above. Space Stations may also count as Critical Locations (although only if the Space Station has not been destroyed).

Kill Points

Some Scenarios will explicitly reward you for destroying enemy ships. Kill Points equal the total points cost of all destroyed ships plus killed Admirals. A scenario may define how may Victory Points you will receive for a given number of Kill Points scored – worked out on the last turn.

In addition, Kill Points are always used in the event of a tie to determine a winner – if the total number of VPs players score is equal, the player with the higher number of Kill Points wins the game.

Nuke the Site From Orbit Penalty

Using nuclear weapons on a planet a faction needs to capture has negative consequences, but can be the only solution. Unless the Scenario states otherwise, a player always suffers -1VP for each successful use of a nuclear weapon against a Sector.

Scenery

While the void of space doesn't have as much scenery as a typical wargame, there are still plenty of opportunities for things to get in the way of your carefully laid plans!

Orbital Debris

Orbiting every inhabited planet are many thousands of objects ranging from space junk and wreckage through to satellites and mighty bastions of defence and commerce. In Dropfleet Commander these areas and obstacles are grouped into three distinct categories; **Debris Fields, Planetary Rings** and **Large Solid Objects.**

Debris Fields

There are two types of Debris Field in Dropfleet Commander: **Fine** and **Dense.** These fields are typically 6" by 3" but feel free to make the fields as large as you dare!

When Debris Fields are placed on the battlefield they are considered to be in both High and Low Orbit, any ship that moves or turns within a field will receive damage from the various objects, resolve the damage as soon as the ship moves or turns within the field. Only roll once per ship per field per turn – if a ship moves through multiple fields in the same turn then roll separately for each.

Ships shooting at a target through/in the field have the Lock of their weapon systems modified and their scan values reduced (to a minimum of 0") due to the debris. If the target is obscured by over 6" of Debris Field(s), then they are considered out of range and no weapon systems may be fired against them.

Planetary Ring

Planetary Rings are vast celestial phenomena that surround many planets. In game terms they are represented by an infinitely thin line that crosses the battlefield. They are only in high orbit so ships may drop to low orbit or atmosphere to avoid their effects. A Planetary Ring reduces the scan of any ship attempting to fire a weapon system through it by 6" and increases the weapon systems Lock by +1.

If a ship moves through a planetary ring while the ship is in high orbit, it will receive 2 Lock 2+ hits with 1 Damage.

Large Solid Objects (LSOs)

These are most commonly large asteroids or even small moons. They should be approximately 2" to 6" in radius and occupy both High and Low Orbit. LSOs completely block the line of sight for any ship attempting to fire through them and if a ship or token would move over any part of the LSO they are removed from play.

Orbital Debris and Launch Assets

Launch Assets (see page 59) are just as vulnerable to the effects of Orbital Debris as ships and as such the following rules apply. If a Launch Asset is moved through a Fine Debris Field it is removed on the roll of a 3+, and if it moves through a Dense Debris Field it is removed on the roll of a 5+, roll once per token.

If a ship with Launch Asset tokens on it enters any Debris Field, roll immediately to see if the tokens are removed (then roll to damage the ship as normal).

Debris Field	Damage to ships entering			Lock Penalty	Scan Penalty
	Lock	Attack	Damage		
Fine	3+	2	1	+1	-6"
Dense	2+	2	1	+2	-12"

Space Stations

In Dropfleet Commander we refer to these constructs large enough to interact with as 'Space Stations'. For simplicities sake we group these into three categories: **Small, Medium** and **Large.** Space Stations are treated as ships in game (in that they can be targeted etc) although they do not move and follow the exceptions below.

Space Stations are always deployed in Low Orbit unless stated otherwise in the Scenario and may not change Orbital Layer.

Due to their size Space Stations can absorb substantial damage before being destroyed. The table on the right shows the characteristics of the Space Stations as similar to ships. They do not suffer Crippling Damage and when they are reduced to 0 Hull points they are removed from play along with any Ground Asset tokens on board, they do not roll for Catastrophic Damage.

Many Space Stations come equipped with military grade defences to protect them from a multitude of threats. A Space Station can have any number of weapon systems mounted on it but the scenario will dictate which weapon systems, if any, a Space Station has. These weapons may be fired by the Controlling Player at the start of the Launch Assets phase (if multiple players control Space Stations then resolve the firing in Initiative Order). The weapons on a Space Station are shown on the right and each scenario will list which weapons each Space Station is using. These weapons do not need to be represented on the model as they change between scenarios. These are suggested weapon systems – feel free to invent your own for custom scenarios!

Placing Scenery

Each Scenario will define exactly where scoring scenery should be placed. In addition, most Scenarios will define a rough amount of additional scenery (Debris Fields, Planetary Rings etc) that you should use.

Sometimes, the placement of these will be defined precisely. At other times, the Scenario will require Debris Fields to be 'evenly spaced'. When the Scenario asks for this, you should stick to the following guidelines:

- No part of any Debris Field should be placed within 6" of any board edge, Space Station, Cluster or any other Debris Field.
- There should be roughly the same quantity of Debris Fields within each table quarter.
- In tournament play, the Tournament organiser should place scenery before games.
- If their size is not defined by the scenario, a typical Debris Field is between 4"-8" across in their longest dimension. Fine Fields should generally be larger than Dense ones.

Name	Scan	Sig	Thrust	Hull	A	PD	G	T	Special
Small Space Station	6"	4"	0"	8	3+	5	-	-	-
Medium Space Station	6"	6"	0"	12	3+	8	-	-	-
Large Space Station	6"	8"	0"	16	3+	12	-	-	-

Type	Lock	Attack	Damage	Arc	Special
Mass Driver Armament	3+	2	1	F/S/R	-
Laser Armament	3+	2	1	F/S/R	Burnthrough (4), Flash
Missile Armament	3+	4	1	F/S/R	Close Action

Special Rules

Ship Special Rules

While most eventualities and ship types are covered in the rules above, certain ships have abilities and attributes that are out of the ordinary and require special rules to address this.

Aegis (X)

Aegis ships are typically equipped with sensors and weaponry that permit a blindingly fast response time against Strike Craft and munitions. They are normally deployed as scouts or to help protect other ships in battle.

Ships with the Aegis special rule add a bonus to the Point Defence value of any friendly ships within 4" of them equal to the number shown in brackets. In order to be affected, ships must be on the same Orbital Layer as the Aegis ship, additionally the bonus also applies to the Aegis ship itself.

For example: A ship with the Aegis (5) special rule is within 4" of a friendly ship with a PD characteristic of 4. As long as they remain within 4" the friendly ship counts as having a PD of 9.

Atmospheric

Only ships with the Atmospheric special rule are capable of entering the Atmospheric layers during Orbital Combat.

Beast

Some technologies integrate their crews so closely with their ship control systems that the vessels behave more like living creatures than machines.

The Lock numbers of all of a Beast ship's weapon systems are reduced by one when it suffers a Crippling Damage result. However, the strain of overload causes the beast ship to suffer another Crippling Damage result at the end of each activation.

Detector

Detector ships have extraordinarily acute sensors and high speed information dissemination systems that relay their scanning feeds to the rest of the fleet. Detector ships may always use Active Scan special orders even if their battlegroup has chosen a different special order for the turn. Every Detector ship in a Group may active scan, not just one.

Full-Cloak

A few rare ships are so efficient at covering their emissions that they are virtually ghosts.

A ship with the Full Cloak special rule can never receive an energy spike for any reason, until it is Crippled.

Launch

Ships with the Launch special rule are capable of carrying and using Launch Assets. Launch capable ships will have their launch capacity noted in their descriptions along with the standard type load carried (i.e. Fighters, Bombers or Torpedoes as appropriate).

Open

Some ships are designed to operate alone and away from other members of their Group or Battlegroup and still maintain effectiveness throughout the battle.

Ships with the Open rule do not need to maintain coherency with other members of their Group or Battlegroup and the Battlegroup will suffer no negative modifiers to their strategy rating while ships with this rule are out of coherency.

Outlier

Ships with this rule may ignore Battlegroup (but not Group) coherency rules, and the Battlegroup will suffer no negative modifiers to their Strategy Rating while ships with this rule are out of Battlegroup coherency.

Partial Cloak

A ship with the Partial Cloak special rule can only ever receive a Minor Spike, it may never be increased to a Major Spike. If a rule or weapon would cause this ship to gain Major Spike, it instead gains a Minor Spike (or nothing at all if it already has a Minor Spike). This rule ceases to work when the ship is Crippled.

Rare

Rare ships are simply not available in large numbers due to their specialised nature or high demand.

You may only take a maximum of one of each Rare Group in a Skirmish sized game, two in a Clash and three in a Battle.

Reinforced Armour

Some ships have unbelievably dense armour sometimes mated with hull shapes perfectly designed to deflect attacks.

A ship with Reinforced-Armour only suffers Critical Hits from attack dice that score three more above their Lock number instead of two.

Regenerate (X)

Ships with the Regenerate characteristic have self-sealing hulls and rapid replication technology that allows them to quickly repair damage in combat.

A ship with Regenerate can make a number of damage control rolls equal to (x) in the Roundup phase of the turn to regain lost hull points.

For example, a ship with Regenerate (3) could roll up to three damage control dice to restore lost hull points during the Roundup phase of the turn.

Crippling Damage shuts down the ship's ability to Regenerate lost hull points for the remainder of the game. The ship can still attempt to repair Crippling Damage results as usual, but the Regenerate ability cannot be repaired. Regenerate damage control rolls also may not be modified for any reason. Note that there is still a chance of the ship taking additional Hull damage if it rolls a 1 on a Regenerate damage control dice - things don't always work right.

Stealth

Stealth ships are constructed with additional subsystems to disguise limited use of weapons and mask the presence of a firing ship.

A ship with the Stealth special rule may fire a single weapon system when using Silent Running special orders (note this also means it can use close action weapons when Silent Running).

The Stealth special rule only applies while the ship is still uncrippled, so once it loses 50%+ of its Hull the Stealth rule no longer applies.

Vectored

Some ships are incredibly agile, able to turn and change direction in the blink of an eye.

Ships with this rule are able to turn at any point in their movement, instead of when the order they have chosen states.

Weapon System Special Rules

The intelligent races display endless ingenuity in the ways they come up with to hurt each other over extremely long distances. Specialised traits that fit in with specific tactical requirements or optimal ship building protocols provide weapons with a wide variety of effects and quirks. The following list is far from comprehensive.

Alternate fire weapons (Alt-X)

Some weapon systems, most notably energy-based weaponry, can be fired with a variable focus or power output to generate significantly different effects.

A weapon system with Alternate fire modes will be represented by two or more lines on the weapon system characteristics with Alt followed by a number (e.g. Alt-1) in the special section. Only one weapon system with the same Alt number on the weapon characteristics may be fired by the same ship each turn.

Air-to-Air

Weapons systems designed for use in space are less effective when trying to fire through a planet's Atmosphere – projectiles burn up due to friction and energy weapons ionise uncontrollably. A few specialist ships, however, have weapon systems purpose-made for use in atmosphere.

While in atmosphere, weapons with this rule ignore the usual penalty to Lock Value and gain -1 to their Lock value when firing at ships in atmosphere. All other penalties still apply, including needing a 6+ to shoot at ground targets. Air to Air weapons gain no benefit from this rule when firing from outside atmosphere. Air to Air weapons that also have the Close Action rule may be fired at targets in atmosphere in addition to other Orbital Layers.

Bloom

Some weapons give off an especially bright signature when fired. They are utterly unsubtle and usually immensely powerful!

Weapons with this special rule add a minor spike to the firing ship when this weapon is fired. This is in addition to any spikes gained from special orders or other sources.

Bombardment

Bombardment weapons are specialised systems designed to inflict maximum damage on surface-based targets.

Weapons with this special rule can only be used on ground sectors. In order to fire a bombardment weapon a ship must be in Low Orbit. A ship cannot use a Bombardment weapon while in Atmosphere, unless specifically stated

Unlike other weapon systems bombardment weapons incur no penalties for firing through orbital layers or shooting through atmosphere – it's what they're made for.

Burnthrough (X)

Burnthrough weapon systems are typically lasers or particle lances which can melt straight through a ship if they are kept on target for long enough.

If an Attack dice for a Burnthrough weapon scores equal to or above its Lock number the Attack dice can be rolled again. If the second Lock roll is successful a third Lock roll can be made and so on until a Lock roll is failed. A Burnthrough weapon can score a maximum total of (X) total Hull damage points in one activation.

If a Critical Hit (i.e. rolling two or higher than the required lock number) is scored by a Burnthrough weapon, only that die will ignore the target's Armour. Any subsequent hits rolled by this weapon against the same target during the same activation ignore the target's armour too.

Maulers

Maulers are a specialised kind of close action Burnthrough weapon that are particularly effective against thick armour as the pulses can be modulated to disrupt it at a molecular level.

Maulers work in the same way as Burnthrough weapons except that their Lock number is always equal to the Armour of the targeted ship. Maulers are close action weapons so their damage can be mitigated by Point Defence (effectively it is disrupting the ionised trail).

For example; A Mauler is being fired at a ship which has Armour 3+. The Lock number of the Mauler is therefore also 3+.

Calibre (X)

Certain weapon systems have been designed to be effective against ships of a specific size.

Weapons with the Calibre rule will be followed by either L, M, H, S which refers to the tonnage value they have been designed to target.

When these weapons are fired at targets with the same tonnage value as their weapon, reduce the lock value on their profile by 1. If the weapon has more than 1 tonnage value listed, then reduce the Lock when shooting at any of the listed tonnage values.

In addition, weapons with the Calibre H and/or S rule inflict Critical Hits on rolls exceeding their Lock value by ONE rather than the usual two (against targets of any Tonnage value).

For example; a weapon with a Lock of 5+ and the Calibre (L) rule is targeting a frigate. As frigates have a tonnage value of L (Light) you would reduce the Lock value of the weapon by 1 to 4+.

Close Action

Some of the most devastating weapon systems usable in space are only effective at relatively close range. Examples include massed missile salvoes, plasma and fusion cannon batteries, pulse lasers, minelets and launchers.

Close Action weapon systems may only be used against targets that are both within their fire arc and inside the firing ship's Scan range. Close action weapons can be fired in addition to any other weapon systems permitted by a ship's orders. A ship that is unable to use any of its weapon systems due to special orders may not use its close action weapons either.

Hits from Close Action weapons can be stopped by a target's Point Defence. Resolve the effects of Point Defence before taking any Armour or Passive Countermeasures saving throws.

Close Action (Swarmer)

Swarmers are a sub-classification of close action weapons which use decoys, split projectiles and other countermeasures to make them more capable of overwhelming Point Defences.

It takes one Point Defence success more than normal to stop a point of Hull damage from a Swarmer weapon. This means that two successes are need to stop a normal hit from a swarmer, three successes for a critical.

Close Action (Beam)

Some close action weapon systems rely entirely on projected radiation of one form or another and so are entirely unaffected by Point Defences.

Close Action (Beam) weapon systems obey all the normal rules for close action weapon systems except one – Point Defences cannot be used against them at all!

CORRUPTOR

Corruptor weapon systems cause ongoing damage to the target ship; Dangerous Malware, self-propagating corrosive materials, incendiaries or even biological organisms.

A ship that takes a Critical Hit from a Corruptor weapon also suffers the equivalent of a 'Fire' Crippling Damage effect (although in this case no additional damage is caused immediately).

In addition, at the end of each subsequent activation by the corrupted ship roll one D6 for each point of Hull it has remaining. Each roll of a 6 causes another 'fire' effect to break out. This effect continues for the rest of the game and is not eliminated even if damage control efforts succeed in extinguishing all of the existing fires.

CRIPPLING

Sitting at the very peak of military technology are weapons of such power that they can inflict Crippling Damage with a single hit.

Weapon systems with the Crippling characteristic inflict crippling damage when they score one or more critical hits in addition to any normal Hull Damage. Crippling damage is incurred regardless of the number of Hull points actually inflicted providing one or more Hull damage is suffered by the target. If a target ship is reduced to 50% hull or below by the attack it will need to make two Crippling Damage rolls and apply both of them.

If a weapon with the Crippling rule is affected by another rule which would make Critical Hits automatic (such as the Particle rule) then the roll you would have needed to achieve a Critical Hit is the roll required for the Crippling rule to take effect.

For example, a Lock 3+ weapon would need a 5 or 6 to make an additional roll on the Crippling table.

DISTORTION

Distortion weapon systems use the opening of short-lived space/time wormholes to tear targets apart so the more accurately the weapon hits the more damaging it becomes.

The damage value of a Distortion weapon system is equal to the number of hits the weapon system inflicts during the attack (before rolling any saving throws are rolled).

For example: A Distortion weapon with 4 Attack dice hits 3 times, this gives each hit a damage value of 3, so up to 9 Hull damage will be inflicted if all saves were failed! If the same weapon were to hit with all 4 attacks, it would inflict 16 Hull damage!

ESCAPE VELOCITY

Escape Velocity weapon systems are specifically designed to target ships in higher orbital layers such as massive, ground based anti-ship weapons.

These weapons ignore the penalties for firing through different Orbital Layers (including Atmosphere) and may be fired from Atmosphere. However, they must always target an enemy in a higher Orbital Layer than themselves.

FLASH

Weapon systems with the Flash characteristic produce a highly visible energy signature when they connect with a target, effectively 'lighting it up' for everyone to see.

A ship that is hit by a Flash weapon system gains a Minor Spike in addition to any other damage effects. In addition, if the weapon system inflicts 3 or more damage from the attack, another Minor Spike is added to the target.

Fusillade (X)

Fusillade weapon systems feature enlarged capacitor banks or ammunition magazines so that they can really let loosed when the time is ripe.

When a ship uses the Weapons Free order, Fusillade weapon systems add the X value to their Attack value to determine the number of shots the weapon system can make this turn.

Impel (X)

Impel weapons are unusual, esoteric weapons that impart a change in angular momentum to their target if they inflict enough damage.

If the firing player inflicts X damage (after saving throws have been taken) with a weapon with the Impel (X) special rule, they may turn the target up to 45 degrees in either direction.

Limited (X)

Certain weapons are so large, require massive ammunition or overheat so quickly that it is only possible to fire them a limited number of times during an engagement.

Weapons with this rule will be expressed as L (X) in their special section. This weapon may only be fired X times in a game, so make your shots count! This can also apply to Launch Assets (typically to torpedoes), in which case the Asset may only be launched X times in a game.

Link (X)

Link weapon systems are configured in such a way that they can be fired simultaneously without impacting on a ship's other functions.

A weapon with this rule will normally be paired with a second weapon with the same Link (X) value. In order for a ship to fire more than one weapon it is normally required to declare a Weapons Free special order. However, all weapon systems with the same Link (X) number count as a single weapon system for activation purposes, although they may be fired at different targets.

Particle

Particle weapon systems are so devastating at the point of impact that physical armour and energy shields offer no defence against them.

Weapon systems with this rule always inflict Critical Hits if the Lock value of their attack is met and passive saves may not be taken against them.

Scald

Scald weapon systems are ones that can pummel their targets whether with rapid fire bolts of superheated plasma or payloads of highly corrosive acid. They can literally melt their way through armour and internal components when fired at close range.

Armour against Hull damage from scald weapons suffers a +1 penalty when the firing ship is within Scan range of the target.

For example: A ship armed with Scald weapons hits a target that is within Scan range. The target's Armour is usually 3+ so against this attack it becomes 4+ instead.