

GM CORE

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STARFINDER



GM CORE

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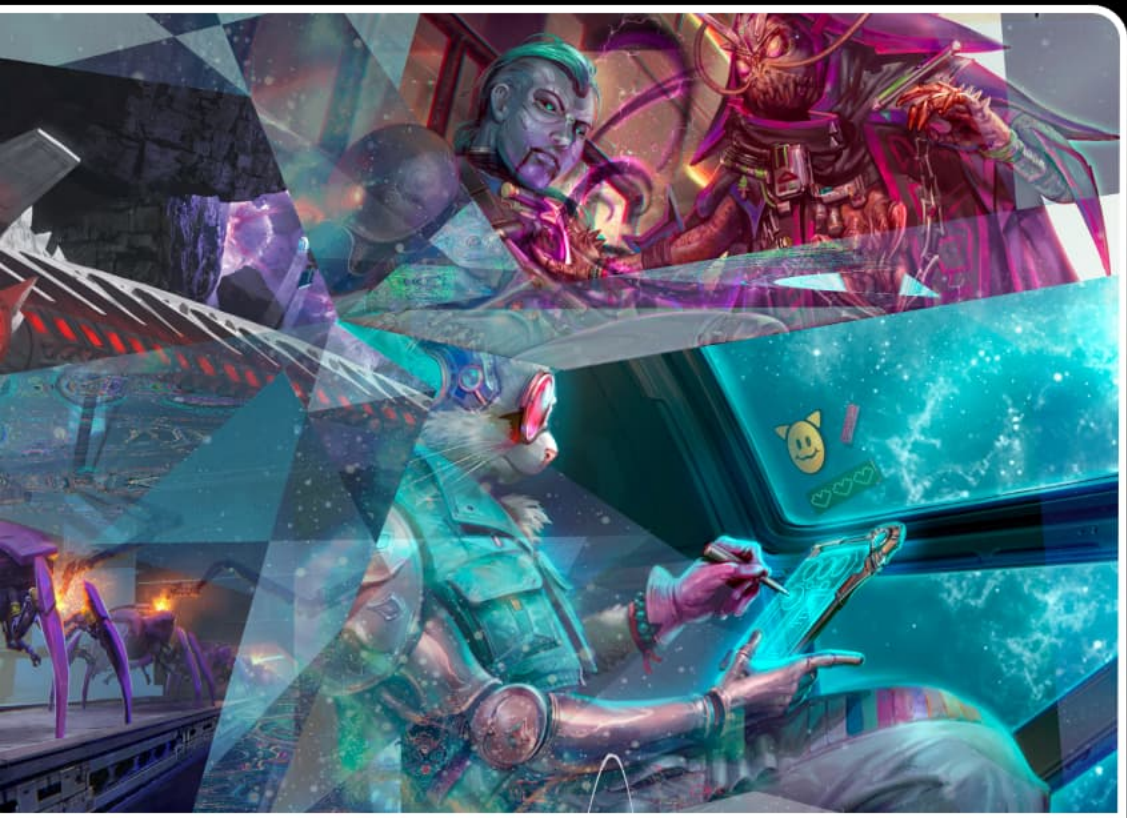


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INTRODUCTION

The focus of every Starfinder game is the player characters–they're the stars of the show and appear in every scene that plays out in-game. But what about those scenes? What stories are being told? What old legends are being discovered, and what new ones are being forged? Who are the villains, the allies, the traitors, the lovers, the monsters, and the gods? Who runs the galaxy? When you're the Game Master, that's all up to you!

THE GAME MASTER

In Starfinder, the Game Master (often abbreviated as GM) is the player who narrates the story and describes the galaxy the other players are exploring. When you're the GM, you take on the rewarding role of crafting fun experiences for a group of your friends. Your responsibilities include...

- Telling the story of the group's adventures in a compelling and consistent way.
- Fleshing out the galaxy in which the game takes place, emphasizing the fantastical and futuristic while grounding it enough in the real world to feel believable.
- Entertaining the players and yourself with novel concepts and rewarding creative ideas with interesting outcomes.
- Preparing for game sessions by building or studying adventures and creating characters and plots.
- Improvising the reactions of nonplayer characters (NPCs) and other forces in the galaxy as the players do unexpected things.
- Making rules decisions to ensure fairness and keep the game moving forward.

Though the word "master" is in the GM's title, Starfinder is a collaborative experience. Your role as Game Master is one of adjudicator or moderator, but it doesn't mean you control everything at the table, especially not the players and their characters. Nor does the role require mastery, either of the rules or the setting. You'll need to understand the game, but you don't need to have every rule memorized. When everyone shares the goal of having fun and telling a story together, the details will fall into place.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Starfinder GM Core is one of the central rule books for

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Starfinder, and it provides guidance on building and running whatever fantastic and futuristic stories you wish to tell. The book also gives information on the Starfinder setting. Rules variants and tools allow you to customize the game, from chases and hacking to vehicles and cinematic starship combat. Lastly, the book provides tips for running a smooth game of Starfinder! Starfinder as a game is all about customization, and this book provides you as the Game Master ways to customize your game just as a player customizes their character. The toolbox nature of *GM Core* makes it easy to select whatever parts you need for the game you're running at any time, especially in the Building Games and Subsystems chapters. As with any toolbox, you won't need to use everything at once!

CHOOSING YOUR TOOLS

Perhaps you're a veteran GM who's looking for new ways to tailor your game to suit your interests and those of your players. Or perhaps you're a brand-new GM looking for guidance to feel comfortable leading a game of your own. Maybe you've been a GM for years, but this is your first time running a Starfinder game. No matter where you are as a Game Master, this book is a valuable tool that can help you tell the stories you want to tell with your players.

I'M A NEW GAME MASTER

Chapter 1 can help you better understand how to run a game in different modes of play, set DCs, give out rewards, adjudicate the rules quickly and fairly, and adapt when special circumstances or problems crop up at your table. This chapter also contains advice on using and determining rarity in your game, working with your players to create a collaborative story, and adapting your game to meet the needs of the players at your table.

I'M AN EXPERIENCED GAME MASTER

Using the information in Chapter 1, you can quickly get up to speed on the fundamentals of running a game of Starfinder. Using the tools in Chapter 2, you'll be able to build precisely the option you need for any game. Using the variant rules options in Chapter 2, you'll be able to tweak specific elements of the game, from backgrounds to the entire mathematical underpinning of the game, to suit your preferences or the needs of a particular setting or story. You'll also find advice in Chapter 2, such as guidance to make encounters more dynamic, which can help you fine-tune your GM skills. In Chapter 3, you'll find details on the Starfinder setting. Chapter 4 offers a variety of rules subsystems that provide a framework for specific endeavors and situations.

I'M RUNNING A PUBLISHED ADVENTURE

You'll find guidance in Chapter 1 specifically for running published adventures, and most of the advice in that chapter about running a game applies to published adventures. The information in Chapter 3 introduces the galaxy that you'll find featured in Starfinder's published stories. Scenarios in the Starfinder Society Organized Play program and Starfinder Adventures use the subsystems in Chapter 4. The Victory Points subsystem is the most fundamental of these, but many adventures also use the other subsystems found there for things like chases, vehicles, hacking, and cinematic starship combat.

I'M MAKING MY OWN ADVENTURE

If you are looking to create your own Starfinder adventures, Chapter 2 provides you design guidance ranging from the broad strokes of building an entire campaign, to writing individual adventures, to the particular considerations of creating an encounter. This chapter also provides a toolbox you can use to build the creatures, hazards, items, and other elements you want to use in your adventures.

If you plan to create your own setting, the world-building section of Chapter 2 can guide that process and help you establish the details you'll need to bring your galaxy to life. You can also use the information in Chapter 3 to detail those parts of your galaxy.

I'M INCORPORATING PATHFINDER

Starfinder is compatible with the second edition of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*! Chapter 5 provides guidance for incorporating material from Pathfinder into Starfinder–or vice versa. Anachronistic Adventures, Archaic Adventures, and Timeshifted Adventures describe different ways to mix the games and settings, such as by pulling characters from Pathfinder into Starfinder, running Starfinder characters on a low-tech world, or running a campaign about time travel. Ancient Foes and Ancient Gear provide advice for using Pathfinder creatures and equipment in Starfinder games.

REMEMBER THE FIRST RULE

The first rule of Starfinder is that **this game is yours**. The rest of the rules exist for you to use to tell the stories you want to tell and share exciting adventures with your friends. There are plenty of rules in this book, but none of them override that first rule. Take the rules that help you make the game you want, change those that don't do quite what you need them to, and leave the ones that aren't helping. It's your game. There's no right or wrong way to GM so long as everyone is having fun–and that includes you!

CAMPAIGNS, ADVENTURES, AND ENCOUNTERS

The rules and advice in this book frequently refer to three main structures of a game. A **campaign** is your group's game as a whole, a serialized story consisting of one or more adventures. Each **adventure** tells a single story arc with a beginning, middle, and end; it includes many interactions, challenges, and encounters. An **encounter** is a single showdown or contest between the player characters and their foes or other nonplayer characters.



CHAPTER 1: RUNNING THE GAME

As Game Master, you run each session of Starfinder, providing the link between the players and the world of the game. It's up to you to set the scene as the player characters battle monsters, interact with other people, and explore new locations.

This chapter provides the tools you need to successfully shoulder the responsibilities of a Game Master. The following sections break down the various components of a campaign, discuss the different modes of play and how to set DCs for the tasks the PCs attempt, provide different ways of rewarding player characters, and describe aspects of the environment that might affect an adventuring party.

A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The role of Game Master comes with the responsibility of ensuring you and the rest of the players have fun during the game. Games can deal with difficult subjects and have stressful moments, but Starfinder is a leisure activity. It can remain so only if the players follow a social contract and respect one another.

Players with physical or mental disabilities might find themselves more challenged than abled players. Work with your players to ensure they have the resources and support they need. Additionally, be on the lookout for inappropriate behavior, whether intentional or inadvertent, and pay careful attention to players' body language during the game. If you notice a player becoming uncomfortable, you are empowered to pause the game, take it in a new direction, privately check in with your players during or after the session, or take any other action you think is appropriate.

If a player tells you they're uncomfortable with something in the game, whether it's content you've presented as the GM or another player's or PC's actions, listen carefully to that player and take steps to ensure they can once again have fun during your game. If you're preparing prewritten material and you find a character or a situation inappropriate, you are fully empowered to change any details as you see fit. You also have the authority (and responsibility) to ask players to change their behavior–or even leave the table–if what they're doing is unacceptable or makes others feel uncomfortable. It's never appropriate to make the person who is uncomfortable responsible for resolving a problem. It's okay if mistakes happen. What's important is how you respond and move forward.

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Gaming is for everyone. Never let those acting in bad faith undermine your game or exclude other players. Your efforts make games and game culture welcoming to all. Working together, we can build a community where players of all identities and experiences feel safe.

OBJECTIONABLE CONTENT

Before a campaign begins, check in with your players—as a group or individually—to find out what types of content they want to allow in the game and which topics they would prefer to avoid. Because the story unfolds in real time, it's essential that you discuss these topics before the game starts, often in a session zero (see page 9).

It can help to start with a rating, like those used for movies or video games. Starfinder games often include violence. What's the limit on how graphically violence should be described? Does anyone have phobias they don't want to appear in the game, such as spiders or body horror? Does anyone have pet peeves that might anger or irritate them and should be avoided? Are there any vices a player would prefer to remain off-screen or omit completely, such as gambling, alcoholism, or drug use?

After you figure out the limits on objectionable content, you have four important tasks:

- Clearly convey these limits to the other players.
- Ensure you and other players abide by the boundaries.
- Act immediately if someone becomes uncomfortable about content during a session, even if it wasn't banned in a prior discussion. Once the issue is resolved, move on.
- Resolve the issue if any player deliberately pushes these boundaries, tries to find loopholes, tries to renegotiate the limits, or belittles people for having a different tolerance to objectionable content.

THE STARFINDER BASELINE

The following is a set of basic assumptions that works for many groups, which you can modify to fit your group's preferences.

- Bloodshed, injuries, and even dismemberment might be described. However, excessive descriptions of gore and cruelty should be avoided.
- Romantic and sexual relationships can happen in the game, but players should avoid being overly suggestive. Sex always happens "off-screen." Because attempts at initiating a relationship between player characters can be uncomfortably similar to one player hitting on another, this should generally be avoided (and is entirely inappropriate when playing with strangers or minors).
- Avoid excessively gross or scatological descriptions.

The following acts should never be performed by player characters:

- Torture
- Rape, nonconsensual sexual contact, or sexual threats
- Harm to children, including sexual abuse
- Owning slaves or profiting from the slave trade
- Reprehensible uses of mind-control magic

TOOLS FOR RESPONSIBLE PLAY

Consent and comfort are important topics for roleplaying games, and many designers have created techniques to facilitate responsible play. Some methods you can use are lines and veils, developed by Ron Edwards, and the X-Card, developed by John Stavropoulos.

Lines and Veils

The terms "line" and "veil" can give your table a common vocabulary for the concepts described in this section. A line is a hard limit to the actions players might take, such as "We're drawing a line at torture." The group agrees not to cross a line and omits that content from the game. A veil indicates something that shouldn't be described in detail. The scene fades to black, or the group moves on to discuss a different topic, though whatever the veil is drawn across still happens. For example, you might say, "We'll draw a veil as those characters head into the bedroom." Players might find they need to modify their lines and veils as play continues.

The X-Card

Draw an "X" on a card, and you've got an X-Card. Place it on the table at the start of the session. Any player can silently reject content they find upsetting by tapping the X-Card; whoever is speaking then rewinds a bit and continues on, excising the content. As with setting the basic campaign guidelines, there are no questions asked, no judgment, and no argument when someone taps the X-Card. You can, however, ask for clarification if you need it, such as "How far back should I rewind?" Some groups instead make an X with their hands, say "Let's X that out," or use some other method. Either way, follow up with the player privately after the game to see if the guidelines need to be revised. You can find more details at **tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg**.

Villains might engage in such acts, but they won't happen "on-screen" or won't be described in detail. Many groups choose to not have villains engage in these activities at all, keeping these reprehensible acts out of mind entirely.

SOCIAL SPILLOVER

As important as it is to take care of yourself and the other players in your game, be mindful of your group's impact on the other people around you. If you're playing in a space that's not your own, respect your hosts. If you're playing in public, consider the comfort of the people around you, not just what your group is comfortable with. Be aware when you're making too much noise, leaving a mess, alarming passersby with graphic descriptions of violence, or even just giving the cold shoulder to curious spectators witnessing RPG play for the first time.

COLLABORATION DURING PLAY

As Game Master, you have the final say on how the world and rules function and how nonplayer characters act. This rule's purpose is to make the game run smoothly, with one guiding hand ensuring consistency. It's not intended to make one player into a dictator over the rest of the group. Collaboration is vital to roleplaying games!

How you implement collaboration in a game depends on what your players are interested in. In some groups, players enjoy adding details to the world and to the nonplayer characters. In others, players want to feel like the world is outside their control, and the only decisions they get to make are those made by their own characters. Both are fun and acceptable ways to play.

You are encouraged to collect input from your players before you start, asking what storytelling genres they'd like to emphasize, which areas of the world they want to play in, the types of enemies they'd like to face, or which published adventure they want to play. A good campaign includes some back-and-forth at the beginning as the players figure out what characters they want to play and you figure out what sort of adventure would be most enjoyable for the group. The results can range from building an adventure entirely to fit the characters to choosing a specific published adventure, having the players make their characters, and then adapting the beginning of that adventure so that all the player characters have a reason to be involved.

As you play, opportunities to collaborate will occur again and again. When players throw out suggestions or come up with specific theories about the events of the campaign, they're telling you what they'd like to see in the game. Try to find ways to incorporate their suggestions, but with enough of a twist that each still includes something unexpected. Remember that as the Game Master, you're a player too—don't forget to include content that you're excited to see as well!

PREPARING ADVENTURES

An adventure is a self-contained collection of story elements, characters, and settings that form the basis for the story you and the other players tell. You'll have major beats you want to include, some consistent characters, and themes you want to convey, but all sorts of things can change during the process of turning the outline into a completed story.

You might use a published adventure from Paizo or another company, or you might construct your own adventure as you prepare for your game sessions.

PUBLISHED ADVENTURES

Prewritten adventures include background information and nonplayer characters needed for the story, plus all the locations, maps, and monsters necessary for both exploration and encounters. Prewritten adventures can speed up your preparation, since you can simply read the relevant sections of the adventure before a game, and you don't have to create everything from scratch. A published adventure already includes the expected amount of encounters and treasure, and you can find adventures built for different character levels to match your group. Reading a published adventure or running one as your first game can help you see how adventures are structured, which makes it easier to write one later if you choose.

A published adventure is prewritten, but it's not set in stone. Changing the details of an adventure to suit your group isn't just acceptable, it's encouraged! Use the backstories and predilections of the player characters to inform how you change the adventure. This can mean altering adversaries so they're linked to the player characters, changing the setting to a place some of the player characters are from, excising particular scenes if you know they won't appeal to your players, or including additional scenes and side quests tailored to the interests of your players or the background and preferences of their characters.

Starfinder Society

Organized play campaigns allow you to play in and run games all over the world with persistent characters. If you want to play Starfinder this way, you can do so through the Starfinder Society program! Once you go online to **StarfinderSociety.club** to make an account, you can organize games yourself with your friends or join an existing event. Starfinder Society games can be played in person or online.

At the start of a session when you're running a Starfinder Society adventure (known as a scenario), you'll collect your players' information. At the end of the scenario, you'll write down the rewards their characters earn for completing the scenario on a chronicle sheet your players can keep for their records. The rewards they gain are detailed in each scenario. Once you report the session's results online, the rewards become a persistent part of these characters, even if they play in other games with other groups. These scenarios include important choices, and you can report what your group chose—decisions that will guide the future of the campaign!

YOUR OWN ADVENTURES

Building your own adventure can be much more challenging than using a published one, but it lets you express yourself, be even more creative, and tailor the game directly to the players and their characters. Chapter 2 contains guidance on building your own adventures, as well as tools and resources for designing content for your players.

Adventure plotting can start at many different points. You might begin with a particular antagonist, then construct an adventure that fits that villain's theme and leads the group to them. Alternatively, you could start with an interesting location for exploration, then populate it with adversaries and challenges appropriate to the setting. You can start with even less—perhaps a moment or interaction you'd like to see occur, an item or subsystem you'd like to incorporate, a genre you want to explore, or simply an atmosphere you'd like to create.

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CHARACTER CREATION

At the outset of a new campaign, the players will create new player characters. Part of that process involves you introducing what the campaign will be about and what types of characters are most appropriate. Work with the players to determine which rule options are available. The safest options are the common choices from *Galaxy Guide* and *Player Core*. If players want to use common options from other books or uncommon or rare options, review those options to see if any of them conflict with the style of campaign you have in mind or might present strange surprises down the road. It's usually best to allow new options, but there's no obligation to do so. Be as open as you're comfortable with.

SESSION ZERO

Some groups prefer to have everyone create their characters in advance and show up ready to play. However, getting the group together to make characters can be fun and can benefit your game down the line. A session for building characters is commonly called "session zero." Session zero is typically shorter than other game sessions, so you might plan a short introductory scene for when everyone has finished building their characters or just hang out and do something else after you've planned your characters.

Having a session zero lets players share character details, making it easier for their characters to have links and relationships with one another before the adventure starts, and gives players the chance to become invested in each other's characters by organically learning what decisions other players made. It also enables the players to ensure a variety of skills and abilities are represented across the whole adventuring party and plan strategic synergies between their characters. These sessions also give veterans the chance to help less experienced players through character creation. Lastly, session zero can give you a better understanding of the characters and help the players integrate them into the adventure in interesting ways.

PLANNING A SESSION

A campaign happens over a series of gatherings between you and the other players, called game sessions. Each session is usually several hours long, with multiple encounters, some exploration, and possibly downtime. Your session can be compared to an episode of a TV show; it should include some twists, turns, and changes, and end leaving people excited about what comes next.

One of the greatest challenges in gaming is scheduling a time for everyone to get together and play. Often, this responsibility falls on you as the GM, since you're the one who has to prepare your game between sessions. Many games have a set schedule, such as once per week, once every 2 weeks, or once per month. The less frequently your group meets, the better notes and recaps you'll need to keep everyone on the same page.

Plan a time for everybody to arrive, and also try to set a time when playing the game will begin. This can make it easier for everyone to finish chatting, catching up, and eating in a timely fashion so you can start playing the game. Having an end time in mind is also fairly important. A typical game session lasts about 4 hours, though some groups hold 2-hour sessions or play marathon games. Less than 2 hours usually isn't enough

PAIZO'S PUBLISHED ADVENTURES

You can purchase the following types of adventures at **paizo.com**, your local game store, or many bookstores. If you want to acquire all the adventures in a given line, you can purchase a subscription at **paizo.com**.

Starfinder Adventures

Starfinder Adventures are standalone, self-contained, hardcover adventures. Each has a different theme, and their settings range across the Pact Worlds and beyond. Some Starfinder Adventures are short, covering a few levels of play, and some are long, telling an epic campaign across a large chunk of a PC's adventuring career. Regardless of length, Starfinder Adventures tell exciting stories and build to a big climax at the end of the adventure. Each adventure also typically includes new monsters, rules, and details about the setting, such as a region or planet the adventure is set in or a faction that's important to the adventure's events. Some Starfinder Adventures begin at 1st level, making them the ideal start to a new campaign!

Starfinder Deluxe Adventures

Starfinder Deluxe Adventures are standalone adventures that come in a box and offer a premium play experience. Each Starfinder Deluxe Adventure contains a combination of unique in-world handouts, flip-mats, poster maps, creature and player tokens, pregenerated characters, item cards, NPC cards, props, and more! Each Starfinder Deluxe Adventure is self-contained, has a unique structure or theme, and spans one or more levels of play. You can play through a Starfinder Deluxe Adventure on its own or as part of your ongoing campaign—some make ideal side adventures for Starfinder Adventures that have similar themes.

Starfinder Society Scenarios

Starfinder Society Scenarios are adventures used by the Starfinder Society Organized Play program. You can play them as part of the Starfinder Society or on your own. Each Starfinder Society Scenario takes about 2 to 3 hours to run, so you can tell a whole story in a short amount of time, but they're also part of a larger continuity and can be combined together to form a longer campaign. Starfinder Society Scenarios also make ideal side adventures for Starfinder Adventures that have similar themes. With new scenarios releasing every month, there's always another adventure waiting in the wings!



time to get much done in most Starfinder campaigns. If your session will be longer than 2 hours, plan out some 15-minute breaks (in addition to bathroom and beverage breaks, which players can take as needed).

RUNNING A SESSION

During a session, you're in charge of keeping the game's action moving, managing the different modes of play, fielding questions, and making rules decisions. You'll also want to keep a rough eye on the time, so you can end when most convenient for the group.

You're the interface between the rules and the imagined universe you and the other players share. They will ask you questions, and they'll act based on their own assumptions. It's up to you to establish what's true in the game, but you don't do this unilaterally. You're informed by the setting's backstory, your preparations, and the suggestions and assumptions the other players bring to the table. Keep in mind that until you announce something, your own plans are subject to change. For example, if you originally intended the bartender of a cantina to be kindly and well-intentioned, but a player misreads her and invents an interesting conspiracy theory regarding her intentions that sounds fun, you might convert the friendly bartender into an agent of evil after all.

You'll also determine when PCs and foes need to attempt checks, as well as the consequences of those rolls. This comes up most often outside of encounters, as encounters are more regimented about when checks happen and how they are resolved. In an encounter, a player can usually determine their own character's turn, with you chiming in only to say whether an attack hits or if something in the environment requires a character to attempt a check.

PACING GAME SESSIONS

Most sessions should have lulls in the action punctuated by challenges such as intense encounters, puzzle-based exploration, and investigation. Presenting players with a variety of such obstacles can help them feel more engaged at the table. Information flow matters, too. If the group meets a large number of NPCs in short order, that can make it harder for them to remember individuals. It helps to break things up into smaller scenes and memorable moments.

Knowing when to end a session takes practice. About 20 minutes before a play session is scheduled to conclude, it can be beneficial to figure out how you'd like to end. It can be memorable to end with a cliffhanger—a moment so curious and abrupt it raises questions about what happens next. Examples include ending play before combat, when the PCs find vital information, or as they discover treasure. Doing so can inspire the PCs to discuss the game between sessions. Note anything that could be satisfying to resolve over media, such as email. This could include divvying up treasure, leveling up, roleplaying casual character interactions, or completing downtime tasks.

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STARTING A SESSION

Once everyone is ready, get everyone's attention and cover the following topics. These are in a rough order that you can change based on your group's style or a session's needs.

- Recap what happened during the previous sessions.
- Establish where the characters are at the beginning of this session. Have they been resting since their last challenge? Are they in a deserted hangar, preparing to break through the airlock into a derelict shuttle? Tell players whether their characters had time to rest or recover since the last session.
- Remind players that they each have 1 Hero Point at the start of the session.
- Establish goals. The players should have an idea of what they want to do next. Reestablish any goals the group already had, then let the players weigh in on whether these goals still apply, and on whether there's anything else they hope to accomplish in this session.
- Commence adventuring! Decide which mode of play you're going to start in, then lead off with a verbal prompt to get the action started. You might ask a question related to a particular character, have everyone immediately roll initiative as a monster attacks, or briefly describe the environment and sensations that surround the player characters, allowing them to react.

THE SPOTLIGHT

As you run the game, keep track of who has the spotlight. It can be easy to keep attention on the most outgoing player or character, but you need to check in with all the players. If a player hasn't contributed in some time, stop and ask, "What's your character doing at this point?" If the player's not sure, add a detail or nonplayer character to the scene that the player might find interesting.

STAKES AND CONSEQUENCES

A GM should always convey a clear picture of the stakes and consequences of the PCs' actions or inaction. What horrible things will happen if the PCs fail? What can they achieve if they go beyond what's expected of them? A well-constructed adventure conveys the stakes at the outset, but it's also important to remind the players of those stakes throughout play. A game where the stakes are extremely high all the time cuts out the opportunity for low-key scenes, and can be overwhelming or even monotonous. In most games, players enjoy having some scenes where their characters can relax and socialize with low stakes as well.

Consequences should be specific and evocative. Don't just tell the players what happened after success or failure; let their characters witness it in the game universe. Are they treated as celebrities or pariahs? Does the reactor deep within the derelict ship stutter and ignite, exploding as the PCs escape? Does a failure lead to the death of an ally and a somber funeral? It's usually best if the PCs can foresee the consequences, at least in a general sense. If a villain demonstrates their intention to attack a planet, and the PCs don't stop them, then the planet is invaded by imperial troopers or hired guns. It's okay if you have an idea for an interesting subversion occasionally, but keep those to a minimum or the chain of cause and effect will become too muddy.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

Just because you're the GM and ostensibly in charge doesn't mean you have to do all the extra work to make the campaign run. Some of the tasks described here, like scheduling games, taking notes, and giving recaps, can be delegated to other players. You might also have someone track initiative or the Hit Points of the PCs' foes for you in encounters, or even run those foes if you have a large group and someone would rather do that than control a character of their own. It's also great when someone else can host a session, provide snacks for the group, or take on other responsibilities that aren't directly related to the game.

It's best to figure out a schedule of responsibilities when you're first setting up a game. Ask the players what they're willing to take on. If you start to feel overwhelmed partway through a campaign, you can revisit the topic and try out new options until you find a setup that's comfortable.

OFF-SESSION GAMING

Session play with a full group isn't the only way to play Starfinder. Finding opportunities to expand on the game outside of its regular schedule can keep your group engaged between sessions.

You can get together with a single player to run a mini-session for their character, covering a mission that's important to their story but doesn't concern the rest of the group. You and the players can work out what their characters do during solid stretches of downtime via email or chat messages. You can also give players opportunities to collaborate on details of the story, like having a player design a heraldic symbol for the adventuring group or map out their home base. You might even decide to award a Hero Point at the next session to a player for events that happened outside a session.

Some events aren't suitable for handling outside of sessions. Any event that strongly affects a character whose player isn't present should be handled at the table when everyone can attend. It's also helpful to recap events that took place outside of the session for all characters so no one feels excluded or lost.

HERO POINTS

As GM, you're in charge of doling out Hero Points during sessions. Recommendations for how to grant them appear on page 57, but you can also consider Hero Points a way to reinforce your personal style of Game Mastering and reward what you and the other players value during play. It can help to keep a Hero Point token on hand as a visual and tactile reminder to hand them out when appropriate. You can also ask your players to tell you when they think a PC's action merits a Hero Point.

Failing Forward

Unexpected failure can bring the game to a halt, particularly during exploration. "Failing forward" means finding a way to progress the story instead of saying, "That didn't work." This doesn't mean the group can't fail, or that the PCs should get what they wanted despite failing. Rather, it means that a failure might still impart more information, reveal a way to improve their chances next time, or even cause unforeseen difficulties. Doing so means the player's choice to attempt a check *mattered*, even if the results weren't what they wanted. Allowing the PCs to fail forward means fewer dead ends and perfunctory checks. It's important, however, not to put unnecessary pressure on yourself to do so all the time. Sometimes you won't know immediately how a PC can fail forward, and in those cases, it's usually best to just move on.



Ishmerai Ophir

IMPROVISATION

As a GM, you often make things up on the fly. You can find tips for improvising rules within the Adjudicating Rules section of this book (page 15). When an issue seems to pertain to the story instead of the rules, ask yourself the following questions.

- Does something already established in our story so far tell me what should happen here?
- What would the NPC's personality lead them to do?
- What does the player expect to happen?
- What would best fit the themes of our story?

You might not have a good answer for every question, but asking them can inspire useful solutions. If what you need to invent is significant in the storyline or setting, there's nothing wrong with asking the group to take a little break while you fill in the gap. You can even ask players to invent details. If it's not particularly significant and you can't come up with anything more compelling, it's also okay to say "Nothing happens" and move on.

Often, a player will ask, "What happens when I do that?" This is a good indicator that the player expects that what they've done will draw a reaction from an NPC or the environment. Unless the player is way off base, provide an in-game response, even if it's minor. The player has telegraphed what matters to them, and the perceived importance of their action can draw them into the game.

Special Circumstances

The player characters in your group will at times attempt tasks that should be easier or harder than the rules or adventure would otherwise lead you to expect, such as a PC Gathering Information on their home world. In these cases, you can just apply a circumstance bonus or penalty. Usually, this is +1 or –1 for a minor but significant circumstance, but you can adjust this bonus or penalty to +2 or –2 for a major circumstance. The maximum bonus or penalty, +4 or –4, should apply only if someone has an overwhelming advantage or is trying something extremely unlikely but not quite impossible.

You can also add traits to actions. Let's say that during a fight against a security robot in a mechanic's garage, Obozaya Interacts to give the blades of her doshko an electric charge using jumper cables and a nearby hovercar. You could add the electricity trait to her next Strike so Obozaya can take advantage of the security robot's weakness to electricity. A

PC getting an advantage in this way should usually have to use an action to do so, so Obozaya would get the benefit for one attack, but to do it again she'd need to use the jumper cables once more.

False Information

A critical failure to Recall Knowledge can result in you needing to convey false information, requiring some improvisation. If you aren't careful, this information can be perceived by the PCs as too silly or could derail the game. For example, if a PC misinterpreted text about the god of war, Damoritosh, telling them that they now believe the god is an incompetent coward who rewards the underhanded might be too far-fetched. Similarly, if they incorrectly believe Damoritosh will reward their strength with immortality if they defeat four prominent warrior priests on different planets of the Veskarium, this could send them on a tangent.

Providing false information can cause the PCs to make mistakes, but the consequences should typically be immediate rather than continual or far in the future. Avoid dispensing false information that might not be used for hours or entire sessions after the check is forgotten. If you're unsure, the safest form of false information is information that's wrong but not in a way that causes major consequences. Remember that a critical failure says you get incorrect information, not that you get important-seeming false information. Erroneously believing Damoritosh's symbol is a sword instead of the blades of a doshko might lead to a miscommunication, but one that's not dangerous, easy to clear up, and only a little embarrassing for the PC.

SECRET CHECKS

During play, you roll some checks in secret instead of allowing the player to do so, as explained on page 397 of *Player Core*. This rule helps ensure that a player remains uncertain at times when their character is unsure of how a situation may resolve, immersing the player in their character's perspective. It can be handy to keep a list of the PCs' modifiers on hand to help you roll secret checks more quickly. At least, you should record each player's Perception modifier, their saving throw modifiers (especially Will), and the skill modifiers of any skills they often use to Recall Knowledge. Check in anytime the PCs level up, and consider asking the players to update you when any of these modifiers change.

You can still have the players roll the checks even if an action has the secret trait. This is usually best done when the results are going to be immediate or when stakes are low, like when the PC is trying to recall something during downtime that they'll see is false through the course of their research. You can instead have the players handle all their rolls, secret or otherwise. This works best when the group is interested in leaning into the dramatic irony of knowing a PC is wrong and playing up their characters' mistakes.

METAGAMING

Knowledge the players have that their characters don't is often called "metagame knowledge," and using it to influence characters' decisions is called "metagaming." Some metagaming results naturally from play and is wise to disregard. The witchwarper aiming *corrosive haze* precisely enough to include three enemies in the very edge of the spell's area is probably unrealistic, but isn't that disruptive to play. Things get more questionable if the player says something like "That's a cybernetic zombie, so don't get too close because they self-destruct" regardless of whether their character has encountered a cybernetic zombie before or identified the creature. Each group is different, and the assumption of what the characters know varies. If metagaming starts to get out of hand, you might use some gentle reminders, like "I'm not sure your character's aware of that" or "Can you explain your character's thinking when they do that?" If the problem persists, see the guidelines mentioned in the Problematic Players section on page 17.



Primex Kantol

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ROLEPLAYING NPCS

Although the PCs are the stars of the game, NPCs make the universe around the PCs vibrant. They can become a part of the campaign, sometimes for years, weaving into the story right alongside the PCs. Portray NPCs however it works best for you. Some GMs keep it simple, describing the NPCs simply by their looks or their hook (see below). Others go into more detail, using accents, mannerisms, or acting.

Because NPCs have smaller roles than PCs, imparting enough information to convey their identities while they interact with the party can be challenging. When you create an NPC, start by integrating a single "hook" into their concept: a retired space pirate, a refugee from a war in distant space, or a contemplative who constantly asks awkward questions. Each hook hints at a backstory but is easily described in a synopsis. If the NPC continues to interact with the party, you can then add to their backstory later.

NPCs from adventures and other sourcebooks often include basic information about their personality, gender, and role in the game. Important NPCs often include more in-depth roleplaying tips, personal edicts, anathemas, and more.

NPC Limitations

Always remember that the PCs have the greatest role in your story. Avoid including allied NPCs who could easily solve any problem the PCs encounter. An extremely powerful NPC should be engaged with matters beyond what the PCs are tasked with or have some limitation that necessitates the PCs' involvement. Remember that an NPC is not "your character" in the way each player has a character. Though NPCs who travel with the party can be effective and fun when handled with caution, an NPC who effectively acts as the GM's character is often called a GMPC (Game Master Player Character) and can contribute to a feeling that the players are being coerced into making certain decisions.



First Seeker Sarmak

Betrayal

NPCs, even allies, can shift allegiances. They might betray, fail, or sell out their companions, which can make for a meaningful story event. If an NPC is being set up to betray the party in some way, lay groundwork early on so the players don't feel ambushed by the twist. If the players can look back and see a clear path to this result, it's likely they'll feel the decision makes sense in the context of the story. Try to give the NPC a "tell" or a paper trail that can be found, especially one where the players have chances to pick up on that tell with smart use of their abilities and skills.

Respecting the Character

Sometimes when creating characters, a GM can unintentionally play into themes that can be harmful or hurtful. For example, an NPC with a background of abuse, a former or current slave, or a character with disabilities requires respectful handling. This is particularly true if you, as the GM, do not have the same life experience as the NPC in question. If you want to include these themes for an NPC, you should probably bring it up with your players beforehand and set expectations. You don't need to spoil the character, but sitting down and checking in with your players can help prevent unpleasant surprises and is better than assuming. To keep the representation respectful, avoid cliches and don't use the hook as a joke. Your group's guidelines for objectionable content can also help you portray NPCs respectfully.

A Proper End

An NPC's story should have a satisfying ending. The NPC might leave your story when they achieve a major goal, go on to other adventures, give up their dream, or die. The death of a beloved NPC should have weight. Make it sympathetic and powerful, and ideally have it take place "on stage" with the PCs present. Be prepared that NPC deaths might stir up strong emotions within the group, and be prepared to cut the session short or to fade to black to mitigate the full brunt of the event if necessary. An NPC's death should matter beyond the PCs' emotions or search for revenge, too—maybe the NPC's sacrifice saved a village or inspired others. Let players see that legacy carried on.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the GM, you may sometimes need to consider situations beyond the standard assumptions of the game. The following sections will help you in making these tricky calls or modifying your game to suit your unique table.



- **Adjudicating Rules** gives guidelines for how to use your judgment if a rule is unclear or if you find yourself unsure how to implement it.
- **Resolving Problems** contains some strategies for how to deal with common issues that can cause problems at the table.
- **Narrative Collaboration** lets you know some strategies for involving your players in constructing the story of your campaign and world.
- **Group Composition** covers some important information for playing with nonstandard groups.
- **Characters with Disabilities** offers some rules you might want to use if a player creates a character with disabilities.
- **Rarity** explains how you can use the rarity system to both deepen your setting and reward players with unusual game elements.

ADJUDICATING RULES

As Game Master, it falls on you to adjudicate the rules. This means you're making judgments and decisions about the rules, especially when their application is unclear. Roleplaying games encourage creativity, and however well crafted and well tested a set of rules is, players will always find situations that require interpretation and judgment by the GM. You need at least some familiarity with the rules to run a game well, but you don't need to be the foremost expert on the rules. You don't even need to know the most about the rules at your table to be a great GM! There's a key difference between "knowing" the rules and "adjudicating" the rules.

While GMing, strive to make quick, fair, and consistent rulings. Your rulings should encourage your group to work together to interpret the rules and be creative with their characters' decisions and actions. If your group is satisfied with the interpretation, you've made the right adjudication!

THE BASICS

The following are some basic guidelines for adjudicating rules in play—these are the same principles that Starfinder's game rules are based on. You might want to keep printouts of these guidelines and the DC guidelines (page 52) for quick reference.

- If you don't know how long a quick task takes, go with 1 action, or 2 actions if a character shouldn't be able to perform it three times per round.
- If you're not sure what action a task uses, look for the most similar basic action. If you don't find one, make up an undefined action and add any necessary traits (usually attack, concentrate, manipulate, or move).
- When two sides are opposed, have one roll against the other's DC. Don't have both sides roll (initiative is the exception to this rule). The character who rolls is usually the one acting (except in the case of saving throws).
- If an effect raises or lowers chances of success, grant a +1 circumstance bonus or a –1 circumstance penalty.
- If you're not sure how difficult a significant challenge should be, use the DC for the party's level.
- If you're making up an effect, creatures should be incapacitated or killed on only a critical success (or for a saving throw, on a critical failure).
- If you don't know what check to use, pick the most appropriate skill. If no other skill applies to a check to Recall Knowledge, use an appropriate Lore skill (usually at an untrained proficiency rank).
- Use the characters' daily preparations as the time to reset anything that lasts roughly a day.
- When a character accomplishes something noteworthy that doesn't have rules for XP, award them XP for an accomplishment (10 to 30 XP, as described on page 56).
- When the PCs fail at a task, look for a way they might fail forward, meaning the story moves forward with a negative consequence rather than the failure halting progress entirely.

CONSISTENCY AND FAIRNESS

As an arbiter of the rules and the person who's setting the scene for the action, it's in your best interest to appear fair at all times. Your main defense against appearing unfair is consistency in your rulings.

Achieving consistency is as easy as explaining why you're ruling a certain way and comparing this ruling to past rulings you've made in a way that makes sense to your players. For example, you might say something like "When Dae swung from the streetlamp and attacked the skreeling, I required an Athletics check as part of the action and gave

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a +1 circumstance bonus to the attack roll. Hanging from the catwalk to attack the garaggakal sounds similar, so why don't you roll an Athletics check." Do this any time it's applicable when you make a ruling, but don't feel compelled to do so for truly new rulings.

Through the course of playing, your previous rulings will form a set of shared preferences and an understanding between you and your group—or even become formalized house rules. Over time, your players will think about these examples when planning their actions, which can improve consistency during play.

LOOKING UP RULES

Remember that keeping your game moving is more important than being 100% correct. At the same time, it's perfectly acceptable to refer to the rules during a session. However, you don't have to do this alone. If you're leafing through a book or searching an electronic reference, your players are idle. There are a few techniques that make these intervals more palatable for the players. Letting them know that you're looking something up might prompt some players to also read the rule. This can increase the chances of collaboration and sets expectations for the length of the pause. Alerting your players that you're going to take a minute and read the rules also lets them know that it's a good time to tend to away-from-the-table tasks like refilling a drink.



LISTEN TO THE PLAYERS

The friends around your game table are perhaps your best tool for achieving quick, fair, and consistent rulings. Sharing the task of remembering the rules makes rules discussions collaborative rather than combative, greatly increases the chances of accurate and comprehensive recall of the written rules and your own past rulings, and is true to the shared storytelling spirit of Starfinder.

Asking if anyone knows how a specific rule rewards those players who have spent time mastering the rules and involves more people in the discussion. It signals to other players that you are willing to hear opinions before making a ruling, and it builds a more collaborative environment. In addition, for groups with access to a large number of sourcebooks or rules resources, you can ask different players to examine separate sources. This can greatly increase the speed and accuracy of a group's rulings.

Approaching the rules as a group problem also means that you should never trivialize player concerns about a rule. You must also think about each player and assess how important the rules actually are to them. Remember, though—while rules recall is a group challenge, making the final decision on the rules interpretation and getting the session moving again falls to you.

MAKE THE CALL

Though all the above are great practices for making good rulings, often the best ruling is the one that keeps the game moving. Avoid getting so bogged down that it takes you several minutes to decide what ruling you'll proceed with. Take what's close enough and keep playing. If necessary, you can tell your group "This is how we're playing it now, but we can have more discussion between sessions." This gets you back in the action, puts a clear stamp on the fact that this is your decision in the moment, and empowers your players with permission to express their opinions on the ruling at a later time. When in doubt, rule in favor of the player's request, and then review the situation later.

The best time to really go in-depth, possibly putting the group on a short break, is when a situation is life-or-death or has major consequences in a character's story.

TAKE TIME FOR REVIEW

When you make a decision you're not sure about, look back over it at the end of a session or between sessions. You might change your mind—there's nothing wrong with that! If you change or clarify your original ruling, inform your players before the next session. No one likes being surprised by a rule change. Even better, include them in a rules conversation just like you might during a session. The guidance on discussing rules with your players still applies between sessions. Unlike at-the-table rules discussions, there's also much more time in these situations to read existing official rulings or sources.

SAYING "YES, BUT"

Some of the most memorable moments come from situations that inherently call for a rules interpretation, like when a player wants to do something creative using the environment. The variety of these situations is limited only by the imagination of your players. It's usually better to say "yes" than "no," within reason. For example, imagine a player wants to do something borderline nonsensical like grabbing an empathnid and squeezing it to force it to use its web attack. But what about a player who wants to use a fire spell to deliberately ignite a barrel of petrol? Surely that should have some effect!

This is where you can use a variant of the well-known improv "Yes, and," technique: you can say "Yes, but." With "Yes, but," you allow the player's creative idea, but tie it into the game rules via some sort of additional consequences, potentially adding the uncertainty of an additional roll. Here are some simple ways you might implement this tool:

- Get a fleeting benefit without a roll. Example: stick a dueling sword into a deep fryer to add 1 fire damage on the next attack against a bloodbrother; coat a battle ribbon with glue to grant it the grapple trait on the next attack before the end of the turn.

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- Require a check, then apply a circumstance bonus to the PC's action. Example: swing from a chandelier above a foe; subtly pilfer stylish sunshades and quickly don them to blend in among a crowd and lose pursuers.
- Require a check, then apply a circumstance penalty or condition to a foe. Example: activate a device to surround a foe with holograms; splash slippery grease across a foe's feet and the surrounding floor.
- Require an attack roll or skill check to deal minor damage and gain another benefit. Examples: jump from a billboard down onto a foe for a small amount of damage, potentially knocking the foe prone; spray caustic chemicals in an opponent's eyes.
- Require a directed attack against an object, then allow foes to attempt saving throws against the object's effect at a DC you choose. Example: cast a *telekinetic projectile* spell at a mine to trigger its explosion; fire an arc pistol at a malfunctioning power generator to cause it to overload.

Another powerful tool you can use to help you say "Yes, but" when you're unsure of the game impact is to allow the idea to work just this once, letting your players know that this is part of your decision. For instance, maybe you think a PC's attempt to Grapple an empathnid to aim its web attack at another foe is so fun you have to let them do it, but you're worried that the effect would be so powerful that the PCs would just carry around an empathnid to shoot webs for the rest of the campaign. By making it a one-time effect, you can have fun but don't have to worry about whether you're setting a disruptive precedent for later on.

HOUSE RULES

You and your players will inevitably come across a rule you disagree with or that runs counter to the theme of your game. You might even decide to add a specific rule to an area not covered by the written rules. Collectively, these rulings, changes, and additions are known as house rules. It's a good idea to record them in a place where the group can easily access and refer to them, and where a potential new player could find them. Such record-keeping is a great thing to delegate to a player!

The best rule of thumb in these situations is to be slow to change the written rules and quick to revert a problematic ruling or house rule. The simple reason for this is that sticking to the written rules is the easiest way to remain fair and consistent. However, the more you learn your group's play style, the more often you'll find times where you and your group feel it's correct to institute a house rule of some sort.

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

Being a Game Master and running a game can be a tremendously rewarding and fulfilling experience: you get to sit down with friends old and new, roll some dice, tell stories, and have fun. That said, being a GM and running a game can present unique challenges. When dealing with problems at the table, keep in mind the primary reason to play Starfinder is to have fun. And that's true for everyone—player or GM. Don't "solve" a problem by reducing everyone's enjoyment of the game or their ability to chart a course for their characters. Of course, sometimes your solution might not make everyone deliriously happy. Play style is very personal and individualized; rarely does a group agree on all things all the time. Solving problems can be as collaborative as the rest of the game. It's not a good idea for a GM to ignore the players' opinions—but that said, the final decision in resolving a problem rests with you.

DISTRACTIONS AND INTERRUPTIONS

Maintaining the players' attention keeps a game moving and leads to memorable moments when everyone's in the same zone. Too many interruptions break the flow. This is fine in moderation. A game is a social gathering, so there's definitely a place for conversation that's not directly related to playing the game. These interruptions become a problem if they're too frequent, or if people are talking over others. If a player repeatedly interrupts you or other people or undercuts every crucial moment of the game with a joke, talk to them about limiting their comments to appropriate times. Often, all you need to do is hold up your hand or otherwise indicate that the player is talking out of turn to delay them until after you or another speaker finishes talking.

Phones and other mobile devices are another major source of distraction. Banning them entirely is often impractical—many players use apps to roll dice or manage their character sheets, or they need to answer texts from their partner, check in on a work project, or otherwise stay connected with people who rely on them. However, you can set ground rules against using a device for anything that's not time-sensitive or game-related, such as refreshing social media, checking the score of a hockey game, playing a mobile game, or answering a non-urgent text. You can relax these rules for players when their characters are "offstage." If a player's character isn't in a scene, that might be a good time for the player to use a mobile device.

PROBLEMATIC PLAYERS

Most players who cause problems do so unintentionally—perhaps bringing out-of-game issues and stresses to the table. You shouldn't immediately jump on every instance of problematic play—everyone has a bad night on occasion. However, if someone disrupts the game on an ongoing basis, you owe it to all the players to deal with the problem. If you don't, bad feelings, grudges, and even ruined friendships could result.

Handling a problematic player requires tact: making demands in front of the rest of the group is rarely the best way to resolve the problem. Attempt to handle the problem privately away from the game, or call a break to have a private conversation if the situation is really urgent. As with all emotionally charged conversations, email, text messages, and the like can lose the subtlety of speech—it's better to meet the player face-to-face, if possible.

Here are some problematic behaviors that often come up and might require you to intervene.

CHEATING

Players rarely cheat knowingly, so if you suspect a player of cheating, it's safe to assume first that they're unaware of—or simply forgot—how an aspect of the rules works. A gentle reminder of how the rule, spell, or ability in question functions is usually enough to move past the situation. Every once in a great while, you'll encounter a player who is deliberately cheating. The spirit of roleplaying is one of cooperative storytelling and overcoming challenges together, so one player cheating steals fun from every other player at the table. It's natural to feel some anger in this situation, so make sure you let some time pass between when you discover that a player is cheating and when you address it with them.

Ultimately, it will fall to you as the GM to gently make it clear that this behavior must stop. To do this well, think carefully about why the player is cheating before approaching them. The reason behind the cheating often points to a reasonable solution. When discussing the matter with your player, do your best to remain calm and inquisitive rather than accusatory.

- Obsessing over the letter of the rules.
- Constantly "helping" other players make the optimal choice on their turn.
- Making their character the center of attention without allowing space for other players.
- Repeatedly including other players' characters in the area of a harmful effect without their permission, such as an Area Fire or Auto-Fire weapon attack or a damaging spell.

Other behaviors are unacceptable and must be dealt with firmly and decisively. These can be severe enough to pause the game in progress. Such actions speak to a deeper problem and require more drastic action to solve.

- Repeatedly arguing with decisions made by other players or the GM.
- Ignoring other players' opinions.
- Deliberately derailing the adventure's plot.
- Purposefully disregarding or subverting the game's agreed upon content expectations and limitations.
- Being deliberately rude or cruel to other players—especially if it's on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, political or religious affiliation, the color of their skin, appearance, or the like.

Safety Tools

Introducing and using safety tools at your table can help head off some problematic behaviors. The X-Card and Lines and Veils tools described on page 7 allow anyone who feels uncomfortable or unsafe to express their discomfort, with clear guidance on how the rest of the table should respond. This clarity sets obvious boundaries to help enforce the social rules of the table.

Ejecting a Player

Ultimately, there's no place for a serially or deliberately disruptive player in your gaming group. Such behavior is not fair to you or the other players, and the problematic player needs to either modify their behavior or leave the group.

Before meeting with the problematic player, discuss the situation with the other players in private to ensure you make the right call and figure out what repercussions you expect and whether the game should continue at all.

When you break the news to the problematic player, be compassionate but firmly state the decision is final and restate which behaviors are responsible. If parts of having the player in the game were rewarding or you want the player to remain a friend, make that clear and decide if a player's behavior merits other changes to your relationship.

POWER IMBALANCES

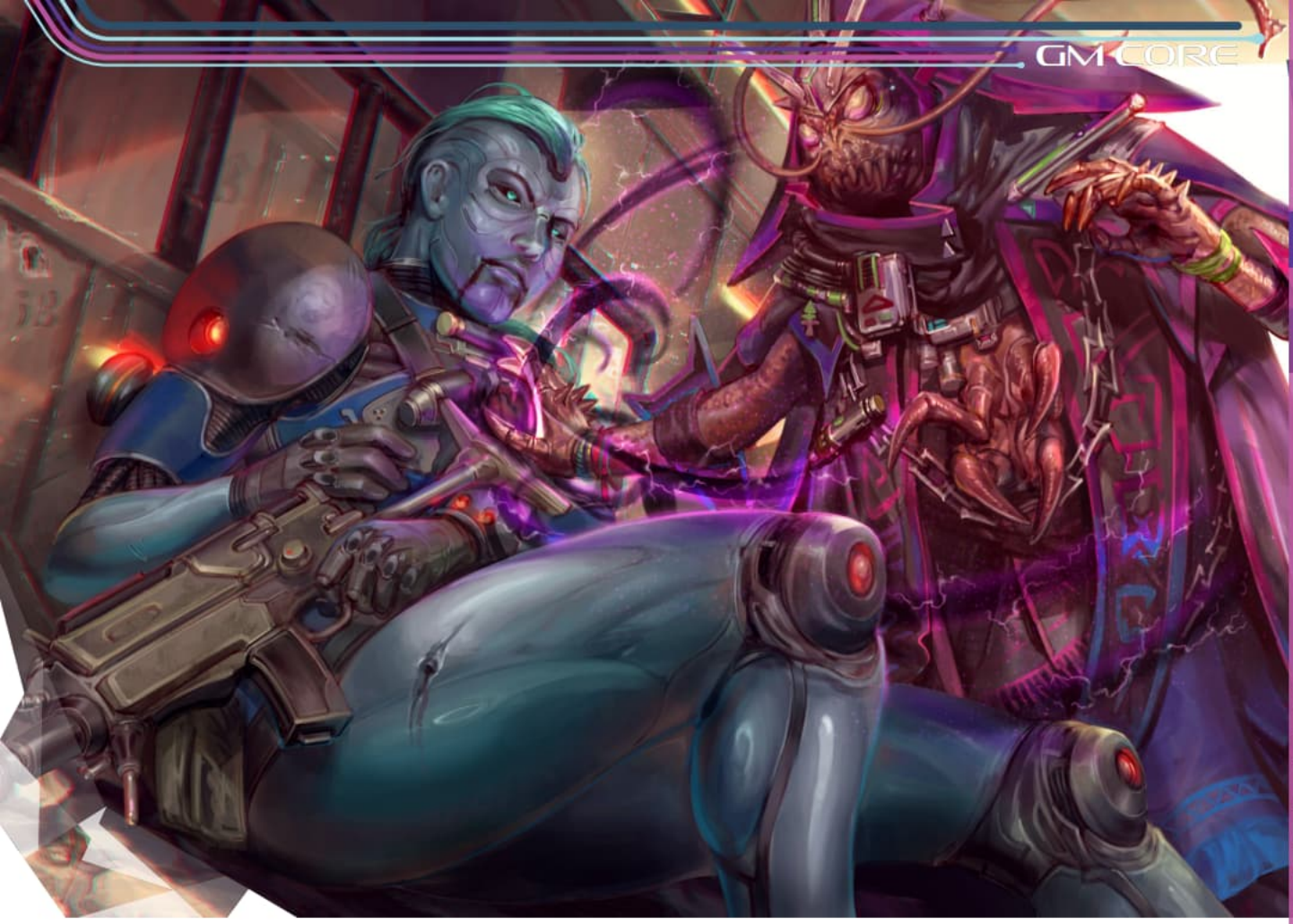
You might end up with one PC who outshines everyone else. Perhaps the player is a rules expert with a powerful character, other players are less experienced or more focused on the story of their characters, or there's just a rules combination or item that's stronger than you expected. In any case, this imbalance might mean you have other players who feel ineffective, or the overpowered character's player becomes bored because they aren't challenged during gameplay.

Talk to the player between sessions, and make it clear that no one at the table is to blame in this situation. Most players have no problem making some concessions for the happiness of the group. If the problem results from rules options, offer an easy way to retrain. If the imbalance resulted from an item, come up with a way that item might need to be lost or sacrificed, but in a satisfying way that furthers the narrative—or consider a power up for the whole party! If you meet resistance from the player, listen to their counterpoints. If you're still convinced they need to change, you might need to be more firm.

It's worth stating that players might still have fun, or even enjoy an instance of power imbalance. You don't have to do anything to address it unless it limits fun at your table.

NARRATIVE COLLABORATION

The relationship between you, your players, and the story is what makes roleplaying games successful and memorable. If all the players at the table contribute ideas, the game holds more surprises for everyone—including you! While some players like to sit back and let the Game Master control everything, most players want their contributions to shape the campaign's story. This is central to the concept of player agency—making players feel like the choices they make really matter, and that the world is a living place they can change through their decisions. In some games, the players can step beyond the traditional divide between GM and players to directly influence how the story



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progresses. Below are three methods you can use to balance the narrative control of your game.

IDEA FARM

Coming up with ideas for a campaign can sometimes feel overwhelming. This is where your players come in handy! You can solicit direct feedback from them and implement their ideas into the game. This style of narrative control preserves your authority over the game while giving players the chance to incorporate elements into the game you know they want to see.

Plan for a few checkpoints throughout the campaign where you touch base with your players to get their ideas. The most crucial comes at the start of the game. It's best to take this step before you even set to work on crafting the world or plot, so that player input can define what's important in the game world. Later, checkpoints can coincide with major story milestones. For example, if the players launch their starship into space, you might ask where they want their voyage to end and what planets, if any, they'd like to explore along the way.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

You might have players develop the stories of some of the regions or NPCs, while your contributions serve as the glue that makes it all work together. This breaks somewhat with traditional RPG structures, in that you might not be the expert on all areas of the setting and plot.

Your collaboration will depend on the interests of you and the other players. Maybe one draws a city map, another makes the stats and personality for an NPC, another controls some monsters in combat, and a fourth doesn't want to do anything beyond playing their character. There's a trade-off here, because while you'll be off-loading some of your work, you'll also need to ensure consistency across these multiple sources of ideas. It can really help to keep a log of which player is in charge of each part of your setting. If you expect one of a player's specialties to appear in an upcoming session, let them know ahead of time so they can prepare or discuss their ideas in advance with you.

DECENTRALIZED STORYTELLING

What if you want to go all the way and completely break down the walls between the GM and other players? What if you want to preside over a game in which anyone can speak for any of the NPCs, and when someone tries to determine what's down the next hallway, it's just as likely to come from another player as from you? In this approach, one of your biggest jobs is asking questions or giving prompts. "When the airlock opens, what's beyond?" "How does the general react to Obozaya's taunt?" You can direct your questions to individual players, leave them open to all, and put forth your own suggestions.

This approach works best when players are comfortable with one another and willing to both take responsibility in building the story and accept that some of their ideas will go unused. It's well suited for shorter campaigns, or ones in which players take turns in the GM's seat.

CHALLENGES

The largest risk of putting narrative control in multiple people's hands is losing a cohesive story. When multiple people have conflicting ideas about the tone of the game or particulars of the setting, you can end up with something that doesn't satisfy anyone. One of your tasks as GM is to recap events to clarify and reinforce the shared narrative.

Shared narrative control also complicates planning ahead. The group might need to improvise an encounter, take a break while you (and maybe other players) prep to go in a new direction, or even revise their plans. It helps to limit yourself to creatures that you can quickly find stats for in *Alien Core* or another monster book to avoid spending hours of work on creatures you won't use.

Also, don't lose sight of your own enjoyment! You shouldn't sacrifice how much fun you have for others.

STORY POINTS

If you prefer, you can give players a number of Story Points at the start of each session (typically 2 or 3). They can expend these to determine what happens next in the story. Having a currency like this means you stay in the captain's chair while allowing other players to interject when it's important to them. For most groups, a Story Point should allow the player to suggest a plot twist that can be resolved quickly or to establish a relevant fact or NPC attitude. It can't determine the outcome of an entire scene or vastly alter the reality of the setting.

GROUP COMPOSITION

No two Starfinder groups are exactly the same. At each gaming table, the GM and players work together to find their own style for the game and to tell their own stories. Some of these differences require the GM to make adjustments, especially for groups participating in Starfinder Society Organized Play, large or small groups, and groups in which one or more players has additional needs.

STARFINDER SOCIETY ORGANIZED PLAY

The Starfinder Society Organized Play campaign is a thriving, worldwide organization of players and GMs. While most home campaigns provide long-running stories with a consistent group, Starfinder Society provides adventures designed to be completed in a single game session, so that players can continue their characters' stories whenever and wherever works best for them.

To allow this flexibility while maintaining a fair experience, the Starfinder Society campaign handles some tasks that are normally in the GM's purview, such as selecting which rules options are available to PCs. Starfinder Society GMs are encouraged to allow players to apply creative solutions to the situations they face. For example, PCs may be able to use holograms, magic, bribery, or social skills to bypass a challenge that is presented in the scenario as a combat encounter. For more information about playing, running, and organizing games for Starfinder Society Organized Play, visit **StarfinderSociety.club**.

UNUSUAL GROUP SIZES

The standard group size for Starfinder assumes four players and a GM. Some additional changes to your GMing strategy might be useful for groups with dramatically fewer or greater players.

Small Groups

Small-group games focus more intently on the interests of the players and their characters, allowing for an experience that can be more customizable for each individual. However, small-group games can also run into trouble when the PCs have gaps in their abilities. In many cases, the easiest way to adjust for a small group is to add additional characters. This could come in the form of allowing each player to play two characters or adding mercenaries, followers, and support NPCs to the party to shore up roles that the PCs don't fill. When adding GM-controlled NPCs to the party, it's important to be sure that the PCs remain the stars of the show. In general, GM-controlled characters shouldn't make major decisions, and they shouldn't outshine PCs at their primary skills or roles. Think of such characters as a support network for your PCs or an additional asset the PCs can leverage to achieve their goals. When running these GM-controlled NPCs, consider allowing your players to give the NPCs basic directions, tactical suggestions, or even select their exploration activities or targets in battle. If the PCs are working on a plan or enacting a combat strategy, these NPCs should always support it and supplement it, not hinder it—even if such actions would be out of character for that NPC. You can also use variant rules like free archetypes (page 84), extra loot, or even just a few bonus trained skills to help improve the PCs' overall flexibility.

Large Groups

Large-group games bring together the creativity and enthusiasm of many players, and they lend themselves to combat at a grand scale. However, they also divide the GM's attention. Large groups also need to set ground rules for how many players need to be present for the game to run when some players are missing, and what happens to the characters of players who are absent for a session. Ideally, you develop a simple narrative reason that enables all characters to participate in or sit out events from session to session, as player attendance requires. Some players prefer to leave their characters with the GM and have them become party-run or GM-run NPCs during their absence—such characters should be treated with care, have their consumable equipment and valuable resources preserved, and shouldn't be at risk of death or permanent harm.

Recaps at the beginning of each session are crucial to keep everyone on the same page. Delegation is one of your most powerful tools to keep the session running smoothly. For example, you can put the players in charge of recapping the events from the previous session, handling initiative, managing the party's armory, looking up rules, or helping with accessories like props and music. Also consider which tasks really need to be taken care of while everyone is there. For example, you could ask your players to handle selling items, deciding which common items they want to buy, and leveling up between sessions instead of at the table.

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Inevitably, there will be situations and circumstances that don't involve the whole group. In a sufficiently large group, splitting the party is not necessarily dangerous. If the party splits up for more than a short stint, you can call for separate sessions to determine what happens to the two halves of the group, allowing them to reunite and share their findings afterward. Whether or not the party splits, having more players means less active time for each character. Look for opportunities to highlight each PC by providing challenges that play to their strengths or tie in story elements to which they are particularly connected.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND CHRONIC ILLNESS

Some disabilities, such as mental illness and chronic illnesses, are best left to the player to roleplay. Mental illness is an especially fraught topic, with a history of insensitive portrayal. Be careful about the intentions of the player and the impact the presentation might have on other players.

PLAYER NEEDS

Sometimes, making your game accessible and fun for everyone at the table requires making some adjustments to your typical GMing style or player setup. The first step is open communication so you can learn what the players need, what accommodations would be helpful, and what type of assistance players do and don't want to receive.

Sensory Differences

Players may have differences in the way that they process sensory information, as well as which senses they use. For players who are hard of hearing or who struggle to process large amounts of sensory information at once, selecting a quiet gaming venue and establishing ground rules about table talk (such as asking players not to interrupt each other) can make the game more accessible. Such players can also often benefit from handouts they can consult during the session. Keep in mind the way your players perceive the world when describing locations. For example, if you have a blind or visually impaired player at the table, instead of simply describing what a location looks like, describe how it sounds and smells, the temperature of the room, the feeling of the breeze, and other aspects of the scene that they can identify with.

Attention Span

It's not uncommon for people to struggle to maintain their attention for hours on end, especially for young players. If keeping attention is an issue at your table, add breaks to the game. Whether you're just taking a break to stretch and chat or enjoying a full meal in the middle of the game, switching up the context helps players refresh their focus.

Some players remain more engaged if they have something else to do while playing, such as doodling, pacing, stacking dice, or fiddling with a tangible object, sensory gadget, or fidget tool. Work with your players to identify which preferred behaviors satisfy these players without distracting the rest of the group and to ensure everyone's needs are met. Some players might prefer to take on extra tasks at the gaming table, such as tracking initiative during combat or managing background music to help them stay focused on the game.

Maintaining attention can be particularly challenging for some players when their character is not engaged, such as when the party splits or when they have just finished their turn in a large combat. You can allow players to engage in other activities during the session, such as texting, reading, or playing other games, and then draw them back into the game when their character is active.



CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES

A player might want to create a character with a disability, or their character might end up with a disability over the course of play. Work with the player to find ways to respectfully represent the disability. Conditions such as blinded and deafened aren't a good fit for a character who has been living with a disability long-term. Here are suggestions for rules you might use for PCs with disabilities.

BLINDNESS OR IMPAIRED VISION

A blind character can't detect anything using vision, critically fails Perception checks requiring sight, is immune to visual effects, and can't be blinded or dazzled. You might give this character the Blind-Fight feat (*Pathfinder Player Core* 145) for free.

A character with impaired vision might take a –2 to –4 penalty to vision-based Perception checks. Spectacles or other corrective devices and augmentations might reduce or remove this. Such devices are commonplace and accessible throughout the universe and can be found in most settlements or created on demand at UPB printing kiosks. They usually cost 5 credits and are available in a variety of forms. If the device is an augmentation, it doesn't count toward a character's implant limit. Likewise, if it's an armor upgrade, it doesn't occupy an upgrade slot.

DEAFNESS OR BEING HARD OF HEARING

A deaf character can't detect anything using hearing, critically fails Perception checks that require hearing, and is immune to auditory effects. These disabilities typically don't restrict their ability cast spells or use magic items, but if they perform an action they're not accustomed to that involves auditory elements, they must succeed at a DC 5 flat check or the action is lost. It's best to give them the Sign Language feat for free, and you might give them Read Lips as well (*Player Core* 227). You might give one or more other characters in the group Sign Language for free as well.

A hard-of-hearing character might take a –2 to –4 penalty to Perception checks that are hearing-based. Like spectacles, corrective devices and augmentations for hearing are commonplace and accessible across the universe and can be found in most settlements or created on demand at UPB printing kiosks. Such corrective devices usually cost 5 credits and are available in a variety of forms. If the device is an augmentation, it doesn't count toward a character's implant limit. Likewise, if it's an armor upgrade, it doesn't occupy an upgrade slot.

MISSING LIMBS AND MOBILITY

Characters in Starfinder have a wide variety of body types and appendages. While rare, some items require certain limbs or other body parts to function or wield. It's important to allow these items to work for all characters. You're encouraged to create an alternative form of such items whenever desired, turning boots into wristbands for a character without legs, for example.

A character with a missing hand or arm might need to spend 2 actions to Interact with an item that requires two hands, or otherwise compensate. Using a two-handed weapon is not possible. Someone missing a foot or leg might take a small penalty to Speed, and if they have no legs or are unable to walk, they might use a wheelchair, hoverchair, vehicle, jetpack, flight magic, or other items, armor upgrades, and augmentations. Prosthetics are common and come in many different materials, styles, and sizes. Characters can acquire prosthetics in most settlements across the universe or create them on demand at UPB printing kiosks. Prosthetic limbs are an augmentation that appear on page 290 of *Player Core*, cost 5 credits, and don't count toward a character's implant limit.

RARITY

The rarity system is a powerful tool that helps you and your group customize your story, your characters, your worlds, and your universe to better match your game's themes and setting. You can also use it to keep the complexity of your game low by limiting access to unusual options.

THE FOUR RARITIES

Let's first review the default usage for the four rarities in the game and how these already start to tell a story about your universe.

- **Common** elements are prevalent enough, at least among adventurers, that a player is assumed to be able to access them provided they meet the prerequisites (if any).
- **Uncommon** elements are difficult to access or regionally specific, but a PC can usually find them eventually with enough effort, potentially by choosing a specific character option or spending substantial downtime tracking them down.
- **Rare** elements are lost technology, ancient magic, cutting edge biotech, and other options that PCs can access only if you specifically make them available.
- **Unique** elements are one of a kind, like a specific magical artifact, one-of-a-kind prototype, or a named creature. You have full control over whether PCs can access them. Named NPCs are unique creatures, though that doesn't mean their base creature type is unique. For instance, a shirren named Zazi is unique, but that doesn't mean it would be any harder for a PC encountering her to tell she's a shirren—just to discern specific information about her.

RARITY AND POWER

Options of higher rarities aren't necessarily more powerful than common ones, but they might have unusual capabilities with large ramifications for the campaign setting or the types of narrative moments common in a science fantasy game. For instance, the *raise dead* spell is uncommon, since Starfinder's default setting assumes that the death of important

characters, like the leaders of galactic federations or powerful villains, shouldn't be easily reversed by any common doctor or mystic, only those who have specialized knowledge in these complex fields.

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Just because something is common or uncommon in one context doesn't necessarily mean it's the same in others. This is specifically true when comparing the commonality of a creature and an ancestry. For instance, while orocorans are a relatively common foe for adventurers to encounter in the Gelid Edge and are thus a common creature, in most settings they're still far less prevalent than humans or ysoki and would be an uncommon ancestry.

Because uncommon elements are available in certain circumstances, they often vary by locale, even within the same solar system. For instance, weapons wielded by soldiers of the Azlanti Star Empire, such as the aeon rifle might be uncommon in the Pact Worlds, but in the Azlanti Star Empire, an aeon rifle would be common and some Pact Worlds weapons, perhaps the aucturnite chakram, might be uncommon. Similarly, in the Veskarium, uncommon vesk weapons like the doshakari might be common. Some items are uncommon everywhere, such as the quasar solarian crystal.



The same is true of many ancestries and alien creatures. While ijtikri and talphi are common in the Veskarium, they're less often encountered in the Pact Worlds. This is particularly noticeable for ancestries who live primarily on a single planet, such as copaxis, or who lack access to Drift travel. Likewise, khefaks are common creatures on Akiton but are uncommonly encountered on Castrovel and are rarely encountered on Vesk-8, though they've infested many desert worlds, industrial parks, and junkyards near and far. Creatures that are native to a specific place are more likely to be found in other places with similar environments.

Similarly, technology levels can be a factor in rarity. Civilizations with industrial levels of technology probably lack access to starships but likely still have machine guns and shock truncheons, while civilizations with medieval levels of technology might treat all Starfinder items as rare or unique and instead use items from Pathfinder in their place. Conversely, PCs accustomed to Pact Worlds-level technology who suddenly find themselves on a technologically advanced world will encounter rare and unique items that are common in this new region. Using rarity in this way can help differentiate technology levels for adventures that occur on isolated planets, alternate realities, or in other time periods.

Access Entries

Uncommon elements sometimes have an Access entry in their stat block. An Access entry usually speaks to elements of a character's backstory or experiences, such as "worshipper of Ibra," "member of the Starfinder Society," or "from Absalom Station." A character who meets the access requirements can freely choose that option just like they would a common option, even though it's uncommon. Unlike a Prerequisites entry, an Access entry never speaks to mechanical requirements needed to make the rules function, so if you'd like to modify Access requirements, you can do so without worrying about altering game balance.

STARTING ELEMENTS

Elements like ancestries, backgrounds, classes, and heritages that a player must select at character creation can still be uncommon or rare. Obviously, there's no opportunity for the player character to search for them during play, but these rarities still indicate the prevalence of adventurers with those elements in the world. You can decide to allow them on a case-by-case basis depending on the campaign and the story your group wants to tell. For instance, a game set in the Szandite Collective might have fonqugon as a common ancestry, while the typical common ancestries are less common. An official player's guide for a Starfinder Adventure might have uncommon backgrounds that you can access by playing the adventure.

STORYTELLING

You might craft a quest involving an uncommon or rare subject. For instance, players might encounter a force field that requires a rare spell to deactivate and have to travel to a distant planet to learn it. If a player has their heart set on an option that's not common, look for ways to build a story in which their character acquires that option.

WORLD BUILDING

With the rarities at your fingertips, you and your group can start building a unique world using rarity as a tool. Imagine a world where one or more of the core classes are rare. Maybe the natural forces of the universe are out of balance, and a PC solarian is one of the only solarians in the galaxy. Perhaps witchwarpers are rare and are hunted by bounty hunters, police, and pirates across the galaxy. For a grittier feel, you could make abilities that can remove afflictions uncommon or rare. You could even create a low-magic sci-fi setting where all spells and magic items are uncommon or rare.

You can add, remove, or alter Access entries to fit your universe. For instance, if in your universe the creator god is really an immortal fungal colony, you might add an Access entry to *raise dead* and *resurrection* for characters who were infected by divine spores. In a campaign where everyone's a lab-grown clone, you might limit Access to one ancestry to start. These are just a few ideas to help get you started. The number of ways you can vary rarities to adjust your setting, story, and game are nearly unlimited.

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RUNNING ENCOUNTERS

Encounters are the major set pieces of a story, where characters come into direct engagement with each other. They can take many forms: a back-alley shootout, a race to disarm a doomsday device before it detonates, or even an impassioned negotiation with political delegates from a distant planet. Whenever stakes are high and a character's moment-to-moment actions could make or break the scene, you'll want to call for initiative and dive into encounter mode.

Stakes: Moderate to high. Encounters always have significant stakes, and they're played in a step-by-step time frame to reflect that.

Time Scale: Encounter mode is highly structured and proceeds in discrete rounds, with each character taking their turn to act in a set order. In combat encounters, each round is 6 seconds long (so a minute-long duel would take 10 rounds). In social encounters, you might decide play proceeds in minute-long or longer rounds to give each speaker enough time to make a solid point.

Actions and Reactions: In combat encounters, each participant's turn is broken into discrete actions, and participants can use reactions when their triggers occur. Reactions can occur in social situations, though their triggers are usually more descriptive and less tactical.



Iseph

STARTING THE ENCOUNTER

Encounters typically begin when you ask your players to roll **initiative**, which sets the order that the characters will act in. The full rules for rolling initiative can be found on page 427 of *Player Core*, but in brief, initiative involves each character rolling a check–usually a Perception check, but possibly a different skill if you deem it appropriate–and then acting in order from highest result to lowest. Below, you'll find specifics on how to run certain types of initiative or deal with problems. These are guidelines, and you might prefer to execute initiative in a different way at your table.

When do you ask players to roll initiative? In most cases, it's simple: you call for the roll as soon as one participant intends to attack (or issue a challenge, draw a weapon, cast a preparatory spell, start a social encounter such as a tense negotiation, or otherwise begin to use an action that their foes can't help but notice). A player will tell you if their character intends to start a conflict, and you'll determine when the actions of NPCs and other creatures initiate combat. Occasionally, two sides might stumble across one another. In this case, there isn't much time to decide, but you should still ask if anyone intends to attack. If the PCs and NPCs alike just want to talk or negotiate, there's no reason to roll initiative only to drop out of combat immediately!

Alternatively, many GMs running for larger groups or in Organized Play settings prefer to run social encounters and skill challenges using initiative order but likely call for players to use a skill such as Deception, Diplomacy, or Performance, depending on their approach to the scene.

ALTERNATIVE INITIATIVE SKILLS

Most times, characters will use Perception to roll initiative; however, there are some times that another skill might make sense. Occasionally calling for different skills for the initiative roll can be a good way to create variety in encounters or allow player characters' talents to shine. Consider the following factors when deciding which checks to allow.

- You'll likely call for Stealth for a character who's Avoiding Notice or hiding before combat.
- You might call for Deception if a character decides to initiate a surprise attack during a negotiation.

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- You might call for Diplomacy for a character who is about to engage in a public debate or is determined to talk down aggressive foes.
- You might call for Society for a character who realizes the diplomat they're talking to is a spy based on misinformation in their cover story.
- You might call for a magical skill like Arcana or Occultism for a spellcaster studying a strange magical phenomenon that suddenly summons a monster to fight the party.
- You might call for Piloting for a character driving a vehicle.
- You might call for Performance for a character participating in a dance-off or trying to soothe a rampaging alien beast with song.

You can allow a player to make a case that they should use a different skill than Perception, but only if they base it on something they've established beforehand. For example, if in the prelude to the attack, Iseph's player had said, "I'm going to dangle down off the catwalk to get the drop on them," you could let them use Acrobatics for their initiative roll. If they just said, "Hey, I want to attack these guys. Can I use Acrobatics?" without having established a reason beforehand, you probably shouldn't allow it.

You might find that if a player has a low Perception but a high modifier in another skill, that player might keep trying to use it for future encounters. As long as the narrative plays out in a reasonable manner, it's fine to allow the skill. However, if you find that they start making up odd circumstances to use their pet skill, or that their justifications for using the skill take too long at the table, just tell them you'd like them to go back to using Perception for a while.

INITIATIVE WITH HIDDEN ENEMIES

When members on one or both sides of an impending battle are being stealthy, you'll need to deal with the impacts of Stealth on the start of the encounter. Anyone who's Avoiding Notice should attempt a Stealth check for their initiative. All the normal bonuses and penalties apply, including any bonus for having cover. You can give them the option to roll Perception instead, but if they do, they forsake their Stealth and will be detected.

To determine whether someone is undetected by other participants in the encounter, you still compare their Stealth check for initiative to the Perception DC of their enemies. They're undetected by anyone whose DC they meet or exceed. So what do you do if someone rolls better than everyone else on initiative, but all their foes beat their Perception DC? Well, all the enemies are undetected, but not unnoticed. That means the participant who rolled high still knows someone is around and can start moving about, Seeking, and otherwise preparing to fight. The characters Avoiding Notice still have a significant advantage since the other characters need to spend actions and attempt additional checks to find them.

GM PRIORITIES

As the Game Master, you'll want to keep the following points in mind to create a fun experience for all the players—yourself included—when you run encounters.

- Answering questions quickly and decisively whenever possible
- Building anticipation for what happens next
- Emphasizing thrilling action and setting a rapid pace
- Letting players know when they're up, and preferably also when they're "on deck" to go next
- Showing the immediate consequences of actions

What if both sides are sneaking about? They might just sneak past each other entirely, or they might suddenly run into one another if they're heading into the same location.

BATCH INITIATIVE

If you have multiple enemies of the same type, such as four jinsul warriors, you might want to have them act on the same initiative for simplicity. If you do, you can roll initiative just once for all of them. They still take individual turns and can still individually change their initiative by Delaying. Note that a lucky initiative roll could mean the batched creatures can easily gang up on the PCs, and a terrible roll could mean they all get struck down before they can do anything, so use this technique only when necessary to keep the game moving.

PLACING CHARACTERS ON THE MAP

If the PCs are already moving on a grid, as often happens in buildings and complexes, you already know where they are when they roll initiative. If they're moving in free-form exploration, place them on the map when they roll initiative. The fastest way is to have the players set up their miniatures or tokens in a basic marching order ahead of time, then just move them onto the map in that formation. When that doesn't work, such as when one or more PCs were in a different location or the map doesn't fit the marching order, you can either set up the PC minis yourself, then ask if everybody is happy with where they are, or have the players place their own minis. If you find having the players do it themselves causes too much indecision (especially if they try to count out distances in advance), you can switch methods. Remember to place characters using Stealth in reasonable hiding spots, even if that means you have to adjust the marching order to do so.

SETTING THE SCENE

When an encounter begins, spend a moment to describe the location if you haven't already, using some of the description tips found in Evocative Environments on page 38. It can help to describe where enemies are within the environment to better ground them in the location. You can also use the

UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY

What do you do when an encounter ends up being far more or less challenging than you anticipated? If the encounter is unlikely to kill all the characters, it might be best to roll with it, unless the fight is so frustrating that no one really wants to continue. If it's likely to kill everyone, strongly consider ways to end the encounter differently. The enemy might offer the PCs the chance to surrender, consider their task complete and leave, or use their advantage to get something else they want. If the worst does happen, suggestions for dealing with a total party kill can be found on page 33.

If a battle is too easy, it's often best to let the players enjoy their victory. However, if you intended this to be a centerpiece battle, that might feel anticlimactic. Look for ways the enemy might escape or bring in reinforcements, but the PCs' success should still matter. Make sure the PCs feel the enemy's desperation—possibly have the enemy sacrifice something important to them to secure their escape.

In both these cases, consider whether the discrepancy from your expectations is due to luck. One side benefiting from extreme luck is to be expected from time to time. However, if the challenge comes down to a factor you had control over as a GM—like unfavorable terrain making things hard for the PCs or a monster with an overpowered ability—it's more likely you should make adjustments.

enemies' expressions to better convey the location. Is an enemy in a wary stance as they stand near a pit? Is another crouched behind a forklift? Does a glowing holo glyph illuminate an enemy with a sinister red light?

RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

Once you've rolled initiative and set the scene, it's time to dive into the encounter. Go around the table in initiative order, asking each player what they would like to do on their turn; when it comes time for any NPCs, monsters, traps, or features of the environment to act, you control them yourself.

CHOOSING ADVERSARIES' ACTIONS

Players often coordinate and plan to be as efficient as possible, but their adversaries might not. As the GM, you're roleplaying these foes, and you decide their tactics. Most creatures have a basic grasp of simple tactics like flanking or focusing on a single target. You should remember that some creatures react based on emotions and make mistakes—perhaps even more than the player characters do.

When selecting targets or choosing which abilities to use, rely on the adversaries' knowledge of the situation, not your own. You might know that the envoy has a high Will save modifier, but a monster might still try to use a fear ability on them. That doesn't mean you should play adversaries as complete fools; they can learn from their mistakes, make plans, and even research the player characters in advance.

Adversaries usually don't attack a character who's knocked out. Even if a creature knows a fallen character might come back into the fight, only the most vicious creatures focus on helpless foes rather than the more immediate threats around them.

Running adversaries is a mix of being true to the creature and doing what's best for the drama of the game. Think of your encounter like a fight scene in a movie or novel. If the soldier taunts a bastorox to draw its attention away from the fragile witchwarper, the tactically sound decision is for the bastorox to keep pummeling the witchwarper, but is that the best choice for the scene? Perhaps everyone will have more fun if the bastorox redirects its ire to the infuriating soldier who can better withstand its blows.

SPEED OF PLAY

Encounters should move quickly, giving the PCs just enough time to savor successes and lament failures. This requires effort from everyone, but you can make it easier by running creatures and NPCs efficiently. First off, don't worry too much about little mistakes you make when running encounters. If you forgot to apply a creature's special bonus or didn't take an action that would've prevented the creature from taking damage, it isn't a big deal. Keep an eye on what you emphasize during the adventure as well. Be quick when describing a normal attack, but spend a little more time on a critical hit or a big spell. This all boils down to significance. It's fine to slow down the game for something important or new, but it's best to move briskly through anything less so. As you run the game, you'll quickly develop a sense for what's significant and what's not.

Looking up Rules

One of the primary ways the game slows down is when you or another player needs to look up a rule. For something that isn't too impactful, it's better to just make a ruling on the spot and move on. Tell the player they can look it up when it isn't their turn, and you'll play it as written after that, but that the game needs to move on in the meantime. It's okay to look up something that's both significant and heavily rules-dependent, such as a spell description or the death and dying rules. Even then, reciting a full chunk of rules text can pull players out of the flow of play, so feel free to summarize. It also helps to empower your players to look things up in advance if they think they'll need them, so they're ready to go when their turns come around. This can be tough as a GM since it's essentially always your turn. However, you can ask a player to look something up for you, or, if you need to pause long enough to reference certain books, remind the players to plan for their next turns while you're busy.

Rewinding

Though "rewinding" can happen in any mode of play, it's usually most troublesome in encounters. Rewinding happens when a player forgot to add in a certain bonus or take a certain action, or wishes they'd used their actions in a different order, and wants to rewind to account for what they missed. The best policy is usually to let them rewind as needed within their own turn but stop them before they intrude into someone else's. This keeps interruptions within reasonable bounds. You might find some adjustments are easy enough to make outside of a turn and can be allowed. For instance, if someone forgot to add the extra damage from a *supercharge weapon* spell to one of their hits, it's pretty easy to reduce the foe's HP on another turn, but if they realized their attack missed only because they forgot the bonus from the rhythm mystic's *anthem*, that could be too much of an interruption. Your ruling should stand on such matters. Try to be consistent about what kinds of things you'll rewind for and when.

Complex Rolls

You'll often make multiple rolls at the same time, especially when attempting saving throws for multiple creatures against area or multi-target spells and attacks. This can sometimes take a considerable amount of time if you're resolving the result of each creature's save and then determining its degree of success. To do so quickly, you could use one of the following techniques.

- Get the PC's Difficulty Class first, and have the player roll damage while you roll the saving throws.
- Use separate colors of dice for the different types of foes, or arrange the dice in such a way that it's easier for you to tell which creatures or NPCs are which.
- Go in order from the best enemy results (the highest total) to the worst. This means you'll need to ask for the results on a success only once, the damage on a failure once, and so on. It also means you only need to figure out when you're moving to a lower degree of success, rather than recalculating them each time.

This can be more of a challenge when asking for PC rolls. Make sure you get the attention of every player whose PC is affected. Have them all roll, but hold off on announcing their results. While they roll their saves, roll damage or other variable effects. Then, announce the DC. Say, "Who critically succeeded?" and "Who succeeded?" and so on down the line, so you only have to share the results for each category once. You can choose not to announce the DC if you want and ask for results by multiples of 10 instead, but it typically takes longer, and it's still possible that the players can determine or estimate the DC anyway.

ADJUDICATING ACTIONS

Some of the basic actions of the game require you to interpret how a rule should apply. Here, you'll find advice on the types of rules calls that can occur frequently. For rules decisions that are either/or (such as whether a creature can Aid or Take Cover), a PC can usually determine before they take the action whether doing so is viable; if it isn't viable for some reason, alert them that it won't work before they spend time, actions, or resources trying. There are some exceptions, especially if the reason an action wouldn't work is something a character wouldn't know. For example, if a character tries to Take Cover behind a parked vehicle, not realizing it's a hologram, you shouldn't reveal the deception prematurely.

Aid

It's up to you whether someone's preparation is enough to let them Aid an ally. The preparation should be specific to the task at hand. Helping someone hold a lockpick steady might be enough preparation to Aid an attempt to Pick a Lock, but just saying you're going to "encourage" them wouldn't. Second, the character who's attempting to Aid needs to be in a proper position to help and able to convey any necessary information. Helping a character Climb a wall is pretty tough if the character a PC wishes to Aid is nowhere near them. Similarly, a character usually needs to be next to their ally or a foe to Aid the ally in attacking the foe. You'll also need to determine how long the preparation takes. Typically, a single action is sufficient to help with a task that's completed in a single round, but to help someone perform a long-term task, like research, the character must help until the task is finished.

Ready

The Ready activity lets the acting person choose the trigger for their readied action. However, you might need to put limits on what they can choose. Notably, the trigger must be something that happens in the game universe and is observable by the character, rather than a rules concept that doesn't exist in-world. For instance, if a player says, "I Ready to shoot my sonic rifle at her if she uses a concentrate action" or "I Ready to attack him if he has fewer than forty-seven Hit Points," find out what their character is trying to specifically observe. If they don't have a clear answer for that, they need to adjust their action.

Seek

The Seek action leaves it up to you how long a search should take. Use common sense. Most of the time, just trying to spot a creature hiding in a small area, or something else you could find with a simple Seek action rather than a long-term Search exploration activity, should default to a single action. The biggest distinction is whether something uses 3 actions or fewer—and can therefore be accomplished in a single turn—or requires significantly longer and can't be accomplished in an encounter at all. Consider whether it makes sense for the character to pull this off during the encounter or not, and whether that could be an interesting wrinkle in the story.

Sense Motive

When someone tries to Sense the Motive of an NPC, you'll need to figure out how to convey the information they receive. It's best to try to convey this indirectly, such as by

describing a lying target's body language, odd word choices, sweating, or other details rather than saying, "They aren't behaving normally." However, sometimes dropping a punchy, "Oh, she is a hundred percent lying about this!" on a critical success can be satisfying. You also might need to determine when the situation changes enough for someone to try to Sense Motive again. Usually, this means either the behavior of the subject needs to change or the person attempting the check needs to receive new evidence that something is out of the ordinary. If another PC tries to Sense Motive, gets different information about the target, and shares it, that doesn't really count as new information for a PC who tried previously. Rather, it's up to the players to roleplay out any changes in their thinking as a result.

Take Cover

You'll often need to determine whether someone can Take Cover. They usually just need a large enough object to hide behind. Imagine the character crouching, and picture whether the object could almost entirely cover up their silhouette. Taking Cover might also require them to Drop Prone, such as if they want to hide under a table. Most of the time, you can let them combine these instead of using two separate actions.

AD HOC BONUSES AND PENALTIES

This section covers a few ground rules for how to best respond to PC tactics, when to apply ad hoc bonuses and penalties, and when to use certain tactics for NPCs. When PCs put effort into getting advantages against their foes, there should be some payoff, provided their tactics make sense in the narrative. Ad hoc bonuses and penalties give you some mechanical tools to emphasize that. Also keep in mind that you can change the flow of the story to respond to tactics as well. Altering an enemy's behavior can be a more satisfying consequence than just getting a bonus.

When you're determining whether to grant a special bonus that isn't defined in the rules, including when a player asks you whether they get a bonus for doing something, ask yourself the following questions.

- Is this the result of an interesting, surprising, or novel strategy by the character?
- Did this take effort or smart thinking to set up?
- Is this easy to replicate in pretty much every battle?

If you answered yes to either of the first two, it's more likely you should assign a bonus–typically a +1 or +2 circumstance bonus. However, if you answered yes to the third, you probably shouldn't unless you want to see that tactic used over and over again.

Try to use ad hoc bonuses a little more often than ad hoc penalties. If you do think a penalty might be appropriate, ask yourself the following.

- Does the environment or terrain create any applicable disadvantages for the character?
- Should the character have expected that this would be more difficult based on what they already knew?
- Was this circumstance caused by a bad decision on the part of the one taking the penalty?
- Is this negative circumstance easy to replicate in pretty much every battle?

Once again, answering yes to most of these questions means it's more likely you should apply a penalty, and answering yes to the final question means it's less likely you should do so.

MAPS AND MINIATURES

A grid and miniatures can make it easier to visualize combat for players and give a visual centerpiece for the players to focus on. A setup can range from a basic grid with some hasty marker lines and coins for miniatures to a full-color Flip-Mat with official pre-painted minis or cardboard pawns, all the way to a set of 3D dungeon terrain and hand-painted minis for each character. Many virtual tabletops have preset maps, token packs, and built-in functions for movement and line of sight. All of these resources can be fun to play on! Your setup should match your time commitment, budget, and the aesthetics you want.

You can also bring the setting alive by describing sensory details like sounds, smells, temperature, and 3D elements that aren't represented on your map. Describing the echoing ring of a bullet rebounding off a carbon shield, an errant *sonic scream* spell that shatters all the bottles in the cantina, and the like makes the game feel more alive.

Placing miniatures on a grid can make it feel like you need to be exacting with the rules, but there's still room for improvisation! You might give another 5 feet of movement to someone running downhill if it will make their turn more dramatic. You're empowered to give players minor boosts that fit the story you want to tell and to fill in nuances of the location beyond what appears on the map.

Cover

You determine whether a character has cover. The rules for drawing lines found in *Player Core* are useful in simple cases, but in more complicated situations, use your own discretion to make the call. Consider the details of the environment and 3D space beyond what's on the battle mat. For instance, a holographic advertisement might give cover, or a PC who climbed onto a ledge might have a clear shot at an enemy standing behind a short wall. Be generous to PCs who use creativity to get into smart positions, especially if they spend valuable actions to move or Take Cover.

Splitting and Combining Movement

The different types of actions representing movement are split up to clarify how the rules work with a creature's actions. However, you can end up in odd situations, such as when a creature wants to jump vertically to get something and needs to move just a bit to get in range, then Leap, then continue moving. This can end up feeling like they're losing a lot of their movement to make this happen. At your discretion, you can allow the PCs to essentially combine



these into one fluid movement as a 2-action activity: moving into range for a Leap, then Leaping, then using the rest of their Speed.

This typically works only for chaining types of movement together. Doing something like Interacting to open a door or making a Strike usually arrests movement long enough that doing so in the middle of movement isn't practical.

SPECIAL BATTLES AND MOVEMENT

More complex battles can require specialized rules.

Vehicular and Mounted Combat

Vehicles are everywhere in Starfinder, from sleek enercycles to bulky hovercabs, and while mounted travel is considered by some to be an antiquated mode of travel, mounted combat is far from a lost art.

The logistics of vehicular combat and mounted combat take some extra work. Ensure the fight takes place in a location with plenty of space to move since you'll likely be dealing with multiple larger creatures or vehicles. For a fight in which only one side has vehicles or mounts, you might want to use an environment with a few areas too small for vehicles and mounts, so the side on foot can get a tactical advantage there to offset the other side's greater mobility.

When the PCs are mounted, their enemies should focus most of their attacks on the PCs, not their mounts. When PCs fight mounted enemies, try to keep the mount's level fairly close to the PCs' level; rather than putting an 11th-level enemy on a 2nd-level shotalashu, use a 9th-level surnoch, an 8th-level arabuk, or something similar. This will fit better thematically and prevent the enemy from being dismounted too easily. If a mount is knocked out, the rider might be able to dismount without trouble if the mount was stationary, but if they were in motion, you should probably have the rider attempt a Reflex save. If they fail, the rider is thrown a short distance and falls prone. Setting a simple expert DC of 20 often works well for such checks.

When the PCs are driving vehicles, their enemies should focus most of their attacks on the PCs, not their vehicles. Alternatively, if the PCs have greater or total cover while within their vehicle, their enemies should focus on either forcing or drawing the PCs out of their vehicle or on boarding the vehicle. When the PCs fight enemies in vehicles, try to keep the vehicle's level fairly close to the PCs' level. Consider the transport method of selected vehicles. Enemies driving wheeled vehicles are easier to stop or hinder than enemies driving hover vehicles, and the tactics PCs can employ against such enemies should likewise differ.

Vehicular and mounted combat on a grid is difficult for a running fight with both sides racing at full speed. In these situations, it's better to forgo the grid, though miniatures can still help for relative positioning and distances for ranged attacks. For such a race, consider using the chase subsystem instead (page 214).

The mount rules are for common cases: intelligent creatures riding animals. However, you might allow someone to ride a beast, robot, or other type of creature by making a few adjustments. For an intelligent mount (such as a skreesire), use the standard rules for mounted combat, but instead of attempting a check to Command an Animal, the rider uses the same number of actions to ask the creature to do what they want. As the GM, you determine whether the creature does as requested and whether Diplomacy checks or the like are needed. For a technological mount, instead replace the check to Command an Animal with a Computers check. If one of your PCs is Tiny, they might want to ride on another PC's shoulder. In this case, the two PCs should both roll initiative and act together on the lower count, and they gain only two actions at the start of their turns instead of three since the larger PC must spend one action keeping the smaller PC balanced, and the smaller PC must spend one action holding on.

Aerial Combat

Flight is common in Starfinder, whether via natural ability, magical enhancement, or technological assistance. Both PCs and enemies will gain access to flight early, so being able to participate in aerial encounters is important. For PCs who choose not to invest in a method of flight, ranged weapons and spells are very useful tools, as are other environmental features, such as trees, balconies, catwalks, machinery, and rooftops.

Determining positioning in the air can be tricky, and it's best to be more relaxed with movement rules, flanking, and so forth than you would be on a flat grid. Note that battles can get more spread out with flight. If any creature is flying, it's important to establish the height of potential obstacles in the area early. This way, no one is surprised to suddenly find out the ceiling is lower than they thought or tall trees create a barrier.

The rules for flight say that a creature might need to attempt an Acrobatics check to Maneuver in Flight to pull off tricky motions. You can generally use the same judgment you would while calling for Acrobatics checks when someone is moving on the ground. Trying to dive through a narrow space or make a sharp turn might require checks, usually with a simple DC.

Falls can be deadly and often happen when *fly* or a similar spell gets dispelled. This is part of the risk of flying! Flying enemies might keep closer to the ground to avoid this danger, or they might use magic or equipment to prevent or reduce the damage.

Aquatic Combat

Aquatic combat poses two primary challenges for non-aquatic characters, which are both easily overcome at low levels: breathing underwater and lacking a swim Speed. All armor has basic environmental protections that enable a user to breathe underwater or in a vacuum. Lacking a swim Speed is likewise simple to deal with, except for characters with poor Athletics, who might need to strategize around their shortcomings. The DC to Swim underwater shouldn't be very high–typically 15, or 13 in calm water.

Like aerial combat, determining positioning underwater can be tricky, and it's best to be relaxed with movement rules, flanking, and so forth when running aquatic combat. When someone gets knocked out underwater, they usually float up or sink down. You decide based on their buoyancy; most adventurers carry a heavy enough load to sink.

When one group is in the water and another is outside it, note that the aquatic combat rules for attacks apply when *either* party is in water. You might decide that a character in the water is concealed against someone outside it due to distortion, and vice versa. All nonhazardous liquids use the same rules as water.

Zero-Gravity Combat

Fighting in a vacuum is perhaps the most challenging environment for PCs to contend with. While breathing in a vacuum is a simple matter thanks to the basic environmental protections granted by armor, movement in zero gravity is tricky. This doesn't mean fighting in a vacuum is a high-level threat! On the contrary, zero-gravity environments are commonly encountered all throughout a character's adventuring career.

To run efficient encounters in a vacuum, ensure you and your players know how the untethered condition and Push Off action function (*Player Core* 441). Many characters will develop strategies to mitigate the untethered condition or its penalties, whether through ancestry feats, magic spells like *personal gravity*, or technological items like magboots. Even simple cables used as a tether can be useful tools to PCs fighting in a vacuum!

Ensure the environments you describe have plenty of material around for PCs to Push Off of, cling to, use as cover, and fling at their attackers. Remember that the threat of being pushed out a starship's airlock or falling off a ruined structure floating in the Drift can bring an effective narrative tension to an encounter, even if the PCs manage to avoid being tossed into the vacuum!

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Most conversations play best as free-form roleplaying, with maybe one or two checks for social skills involved. Sometimes, a tense situation or crucial negotiation requires a social encounter that uses initiative, much like a combat encounter. As with any other encounter, the stakes of a social encounter need to be high! A failed social encounter could mean a character is imprisoned or targeted for murder, a major rival becomes a political powerhouse, or a key ally is disgraced and ostracized.

Using the structure of an encounter is helpful because it makes the timing clearer than in free-form play, and each character feels like they're contributing. When running a social encounter, establish the stakes up front, so the players know the consequences of success or failure and the circumstances that will cause the encounter to end.

You have much more flexibility in how you run a social encounter than a combat encounter. Extending the length of rounds beyond 6 seconds, allowing more improvisation, and

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focusing less on special attacks and spells all differentiate a social encounter from a combative one. In most cases, you don't need to worry about characters' movements, nor do you need a map. Be flexible and encouraging as you run a social encounter, and don't worry about nitty-gritty details like character movement except in extreme cases. Allow the PCs to share information about as freely as the players can around the table. If one character is watching the opponent for signs they're lying, assume they can easily convey that to other characters subtly. It's good to remind players of things their characters might know or be likely to notice even if the players, in the moment, don't have them in mind. Describe NPCs' mental states and ask for clarification about the PCs' attitudes when needed.

Some examples of social encounters include:

- Proving someone's innocence in front of a judge
- Convincing a nearby planet's leaders to help defend against a system-wide invasion
- Showing up a rival celebrity in public
- Exposing a villain's deception before the media
- Ending a tense standoff

Non-Combat Level

A creature's level measures its acumen in combat, but some creatures who would be pushovers in battle can be dangerous in social encounters or other challenges! Such creatures typically have skill modifiers and mental defenses much higher than their levels would indicate. See page 132 for information on setting these statistics.

Award XP for defeating an NPC in a social encounter based on the relevant level rather than the creature's combat level. Such an NPC might have an ability similar to the following.

Courtroom Specialist In a court case or other legal proceeding, the judge is a 6th-level challenge.

Initiative and Actions

Initiative in a social encounter typically has characters rolling Society or a Charisma-based skill, such as Diplomacy or Deception. As with other encounters, a character's approach to the conflict determines which skill they roll. On a character's turn, they typically get to attempt one roll, usually by using a skill action. Let the player roleplay what their character says and does, then determine what they'll roll. Allow them to use any abilities or spells that might help them make their case, though keep in mind that when most people see the visual signs of a spell being cast, they think someone is using magic to try to influence or harm them, and they have a negative reaction. Generally, a turn should go on just long enough for the character to make one salient point and attempt one check before moving to the next character in the initiative order.

Good social encounters include an opposition. This can be direct, such as a rival who argues against the characters' case, or passive, such as a crowd that automatically becomes more unruly as each round passes. Give the opposition one or more positions in the initiative order so you can convey what it's doing. You can create game statistics for the

GRID VARIANTS

These two variants can change up how distance and movement work in your game.

Going Gridless

You can play encounters without a grid. This is best for groups who can easily imagine their surroundings without a visual aid and for battles that don't require understanding a complex physical space. Your game doesn't have to be entirely on or off maps—you might decide to play out most simple fights without a grid, then use one for highly tactical fights or major set pieces. The 3-action structure is your best friend. You might find yourself answering a lot of questions about actions and space, like "Can I get there this turn?" or "How many of the oozes can I catch in a fireball?" If you find yourself needing to repeatedly remind players of the physical features of the environment or enemy positioning, that might mean you're making your encounters too tactical for what a gridless game supports. This style works better to encourage imaginative, cinematic action and quick play without getting too hung up on details.

Uniform Diagonals

If you like, your group can count all diagonals as 5 feet instead of counting every other diagonal as 10 feet. This speeds up play, but some people find it breaks their suspension of disbelief. This is most noticeable when someone moves a long distance along a diagonal all at once or when characters start moving diagonally as much as possible to cover more distance. Using this variant requires thinking of the game map in more abstract terms, and less like a real physical environment where the map is accurately reflecting the size of the room or encounter area. You can choose whether you measure radius-based areas of spells in the same way or visualize them as circles or other round shapes. The latter works best if you have templates to use.

Hex Grids

Some of the challenges of diagonal movement can be fixed by using a hex grid instead of a square grid, or by using a grid with offset squares, which works similarly. This allows you to count movement the same in all directions. However, it makes flanking a bit harder to pull off, requires you to arrange standard Large and larger miniatures differently, and causes challenges when drawing maps that consist primarily of rectangular structures since you'll have a lot of partially occupied hexes.



opposition, especially if it's an individual, but in situations like that of the unruly crowd, you might need nothing more than to establish a set of increasingly difficult DCs.

Measuring Success and Progress

You'll need to decide how to measure the characters' success in social encounters because there's no AC to target or HP to whittle down. Page 55 includes guidance on setting DCs for social skill actions, often using a target's Will DC. If you need a DC for people who don't have stats, such as a crowd or an NPC for whom you haven't already generated statistics, use the guidelines on setting DCs, found on page 52. You can either pick a simple DC or use a level-based DC, estimating a level for the subject or how challenging it should be to sway them.

The attitude conditions—hostile, unfriendly, indifferent, friendly, and helpful—provide a useful way to track the progress of a social encounter. Use these to represent the attitude of an authority, a crowd, a jury, or similar. A typical goal for a social encounter is to change the attitude of a person or group to helpful so they assist you or to calm a hostile group or person to defuse a situation. Try to give the players a clear idea of how much they've progressed as the encounter proceeds.

Another option is to track the number of successes or failures the characters accrue, either using a subsystem like Victory Points (page 206) or Influence (page 209), or else something more ad hoc. For instance, the PCs might need to trick four guards into leaving their posts, and you might count each successful attempt to Lie or Create a Diversion toward a total of four necessary successes. You can also combine these two methods; if the PCs need a group of important politicians to vote their way, the goal of the encounter might be to ensure that most of the politicians have a better attitude toward the PCs than they have of a rival—all within a limited time frame.

Consequences

When you set stakes at the start of a social encounter, give an idea of the consequences. Beyond whatever narrative benefits player characters might gain, a social encounter usually includes an XP award. Because these are encounters along the same lines as combat encounters, they grant a sizable amount of XP, typically that of a moderate accomplishment, or even a major accomplishment if the encounter was the culmination of long-term plans or if a significant adversary got their comeuppance.

The outcome of a social encounter should direct the story of the game. Look for repercussions. Which NPCs might view the PCs more favorably now? Which might hold a grudge or formulate a new plan? A social encounter can seal the fate of an NPC and end their story, but this isn't true for player characters. Even if something looks truly dire for them, such as a death sentence, the social encounter isn't the end—there's still time for desperate heroics or a twist in the story.

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ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

A combat encounter typically ends when all the creatures on one side are killed or knocked unconscious. Once this happens, you can stop acting in initiative order. The surviving side then has ample time to ensure that everyone taken out stays down. However, you might need to keep using combat rounds if any player characters are near death, clinging to a cliff, or in some other situation where every moment matters for their survival.

You can decide a fight is over if there's no challenge left and the player characters are just cleaning up the last few weak enemies. However, avoid doing this if any of the players still have inventive and interesting things they want to try or spells they're concentrating on—ending an encounter early is a tool to avoid boredom, not to deny someone their fun. You can end a fight early in several ways: the foes can surrender, an adversary can die before its Hit Points run out, or you can simply say the battle is over and that the PCs easily dispatch their remaining foes. In this last case, you might ask, "Is everyone okay if we call the fight?" to make sure your players are on board.

One side might surrender when almost all its members are defeated or if spells or skills thoroughly demoralize them. Once there's a surrender, come out of initiative order and enter a short negotiation. These conversations are really about whether the winners will show mercy to the losers or just kill or otherwise get rid of them. The surrendering side usually doesn't have much leverage in these cases, so avoid long back-and-forth discussions.

FLEEING ENEMIES

Fleeing enemies can sometimes cause issues at the game table, as players often want to pursue them, thinking they might return as a threat later. This can easily bog down the game and extend an encounter that has already reached its conclusion, so avoid playing this out move by move. If every adversary is fleeing, forgo initiative order and give each PC the option to pursue any one fleeing foe. Each PC can declare one action, spell, or other ability to use to try to keep up. Then, compare the PC's Speed to that of the target, assess how much the pursuer's chosen spell or ability would help, and factor in any abilities the quarry has that would aid escape. If you determine that the pursuer catches up, go back into combat with the original initiative order. If not, the quarry escapes for now.

TOTAL PARTY KILLS

Perhaps the most feared of any outcome of a gaming session, a total party kill (TPK) can spell the end of an adventure or campaign. In a TPK, every member of the party dies. Think in advance about how comfortable you are with TPKs and discuss them with the other players. This can provide valuable insights into not only how you should handle one, but also the implied level of lethality the players expect.

TPKs are rarely unavoidable. Usually it becomes evident at some point during the session—whether to everyone or only to you—that disaster looms. What the players do with this insight is up to them, but you have more control and can take steps to avoid the TPK. For example, perhaps the PCs' foe gets distracted by something, an ally arrives to help the heroes, or the villain captures them instead of slaying them outright. The simplest path is to just allow a clear escape route the PCs can take—perhaps with a few characters still falling along the way. It isn't entirely your responsibility to defuse the TPK, but offering such opportunities gives players more say in their characters' fates.

Should a TPK occur anyway, the kind of game you're running should influence your approach to the situation. For example, in a relatively story-light campaign centered around dungeon crawling, a TPK is less of a problem—the players simply form a new adventuring party and take up where the dead ones left off. If you're running a story-intensive game in which each PC has a personal stake in defeating the villain, saving the city, or the like, a TPK could require you to rework multiple plot threads. Here, you might use the story you have in place; for example, a player's new character might be the sibling of their previous, slain character, thus creating some continuity between the two characters and ensuring that the new character still has a stake in defeating the villain.

Note that the game should continue only if the players want it to. The premature end of an adventure or campaign isn't always a bad thing. If the group is interested in moving on, there's nothing wrong with ending the campaign and starting something different.

BYPASSED ENCOUNTERS

What happens if you've planned an encounter and the PCs avoid it entirely? This could leave them behind in XP or cause them to miss important information or treasure.

In the case of XP, the guidelines are simple: if the player characters avoided the challenge through smart tactical play, a savvy diplomatic exchange, clever use of magic, or another approach that required ingenuity and planning, award them the normal XP for the encounter. If they did something that took only moderate effort or was a lucky break, like finding a secret passage and using it to avoid a fight, award them XP for a minor or moderate accomplishment. In an adventure that's more free-form, like a sprawling dungeon with multiple paths, there might be no reward for bypassing an encounter because doing so was trivial.

You'll have to think on your feet if information or items get skipped when players bypass encounters. Look for another reasonable place in the adventure to share the information or item. If it makes sense, move the original encounter to another part of the adventure and give the PCs a major advantage for bypassing the encounter in the first place.



RUNNING EXPLORATION

Exploration mode is the connective tissue of your adventure or quest—everything that happens as the characters move between encounters. It could be trawling a junkyard for starship parts, trailblazing on a newly discovered planet, or canvassing Absalom Station for a missing person.

Fundamentally, exploration is about rewarding the PCs for learning about their surroundings. To facilitate this, it's important to have and to convey a clear mental picture of the group's surroundings.

Exploration mode is intentionally less regimented than encounters, so you'll be making a lot of judgment calls as you build the world and describe how it changes in response to the players' actions. Encourage the PCs to explore, and reward their curiosity. As you play, you'll get a feel for the aspects of exploration that intrigue certain players, and you can add more of those things to your adventures or emphasize these points in published adventures.

Stakes: Low to moderate. Exploration mode is used when there's some amount of risk, but no immediate danger. The PCs usually stay in exploration mode until they enter a fight or engage in some other direct interaction.

Time Scale: In exploration mode, time in the game world passes much faster than real-world time at the table, so it's rarely measured out to the second or the minute. You can speed up or slow down how quickly things are happening as needed. If it's important to know exactly how much time is passing, you can usually estimate time spent in exploration mode to 10-minute increments.

Actions and Reactions: Though exploration isn't broken into rounds, exploration activities assume the PCs are spending part of their time using actions, such as Seeking or Interacting. If they have specific actions they want to use, they should ask; you decide whether the actions apply and whether to switch to encounter mode for greater detail. PCs can use any relevant reactions during exploration mode.

SCENES WITHIN EXPLORATION

It can help you to think of exploration as a series of scenes, where encounters break up exploration and function as subsections within it. Many of these are based on geography; for example, exploring a starship's corridors is one scene, and entering the starship's bridge begins another. Other times, you'll break out of a scene at a point of interest. If the PCs decide to

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stop their travels and investigate a computer terminal, that's a new scene.

When you transition between scenes, describe what was happening to reinforce where the group was, then describe what they now face to show the change. For example, "You've been making your way through the dark corridors of the abandoned starship, but after a moment of debate, you stop, your footsteps and voices still echoing down the corridor. The computer terminal before you is five feet wide and built into the wall. It has a touchscreen interface, but the screen is cracked, and the text it displays is garbled and difficult to discern. What do you do?"

When playing out a scene, your initial description should set the expectation of what level of detail the scene might go into, with you and the players adjusting as needed during play. Since players aren't bound in a strict initiative order in exploration mode, it can be useful to proactively call on PCs to avoid everybody talking at once. If possible, start with someone who instigated the scene change, or perhaps with the PC using the most relevant exploration activity, like a PC Hacking, Investigating, or Repairing the terminal, Deciphering the text, or Searching for secrets in the example above.

DAILY PREPARATIONS

Before setting out to explore, or after a night's rest, the PCs spend time to prepare for the adventuring day. This typically happens over the span of 30 minutes to an hour upon awakening, but only after 8 full hours of rest. Daily preparations include the following.

- Spellcasters who prepare spells choose which spells they'll have available that day.
- Focus Points and other abilities that reset during daily preparations refresh. This includes abilities that can be used only a certain number of times per day.
- Each character equips their gear.
- Characters invest up to 10 worn magic items to gain their benefits for the day.

Daily preparations are also a good time to ask how players think their characters are feeling. The twentieth morning of a long voyage through the Drift might see the characters wearily strapping on their boots and armor as listlessness sets in, but the sky being blacked out by hundreds of enemy starships could have a tense air of fear. Use this time to set the stage for the adventuring day to come!

HAZARDS

Looking for and disarming hazards is a common exploration scene. Hazards shouldn't appear out of nowhere. A trap might be on a door's lock, a security checkpoint, or so on. Foreshadow traps with environmental clues, suspicious architecture, signs of the trap's past activations, and other signs. Remember that a surprise that's entirely unexpected is often very unsatisfying.

Simple hazards occur in exploration mode, but when a complex hazard triggers, move to encounter mode. When any hazard triggers, clearly depict what action by a PC set off the hazard, what happens as the hazard activates, and illustrate any aftereffects. Remember that a damaging hazard won't always have a huge effect. They tend to work best if their activation might alert creatures in the area, lock the PCs out of an area, or cause a similar narrative setback beyond just damage or another easily removed condition.

GM PRIORITIES

The following points can help you create a fun and smooth experience as your players explore the galaxy.

- Evoke the setting with vivid sensory details.
- Shift the passage of time to emphasize tension and uncertainty, and speed past uneventful intervals.
- Get players to add details by asking for their reactions.
- Present small-scale mysteries to intrigue players and spur investigation.
- When rolls are needed, look for ways to move the action forward, or add interesting wrinkles on a failure.
- Plan effective transitions to encounters.

Searching for Traps

PCs have a better chance to detect hazards while exploring if they're using the Search activity (and the Detect Magic activity, in the case of some magic traps). If a PC detects a hazard and wants to disable it, slow down. Ask the player to describe what the PC is doing, and provide concrete details about how their efforts pan out to ramp up tension. If a hazard requires multiple checks to disable, describe what happens with each success to show incremental progress.



INVESTIGATIONS

Investigating and searching for clues is another common exploration scene. Lead with a definite clue that has details but clearly isn't the whole picture. For example, you might say: "This vidgame console looks similar to the ones commonly available for purchase, but it's clearly been modified for some kind of additional purpose," or "This biotech laboratory has a dozen specimen cells lining the walls, each shut with heavy steel doors and an electronic lock that glows with a steady green light. One of the cell doors is ajar, and its lock flashes red."

If these details pique a player's interest, transition to a more detailed investigation. They might look at the vidgame console more closely or search the ajar specimen cell. Avoid calling for checks if it isn't necessary. In the last example, you'd likely tell them the specimen cell is empty without

another Perception check, and if the missing specimen left a trail you want the PCs to follow, asking for a Perception check to find it might stall the investigation in an uninteresting way. Discerning information about the missing specimen from clues in the cell or a nearby computer console could require a skill check, as lacking this additional information won't stop the investigation.

Though one person starts the investigation, getting others involved can help them become more interested and bring different skills to bear to get other types of information. Reward collaboration and clever ideas.

Roleplaying Investigations

To make the investigation feel real, it helps to talk a player through their character's thought processes by saying what clue inspired them to think of an important detail, explaining what the detail is, and possibly mentioning further questions that this detail raises. Let the player extrapolate their own conclusion rather than giving them the answers outright. Even if the investigation doesn't lead to an unambiguous conclusion, the players should feel they're more informed than when they started.

TRAVEL

Long journeys are staples of both the sci-fi and fantasy genres, but they take work to be fun in play, especially if the timeline the PCs are on isn't urgent. Vehicles, public transportation, and starships are all commonplace throughout the galaxy, making the physical act of travel simple, reliable, and quick. If the PCs oversee their own journey, you might want to ask for a quick check at the start of the trip to Navigate, Plot Course, or Sense Direction. Use encounters and special scenes only if there's something compelling to cover. It's perfectly fine to fast-forward through exploration to get to the next stage of an adventure. That said, if any players have invested in exploration-themed abilities for their characters, those abilities should still matter.

For survival-themed adventures, or for adventures that focus on exploring newly discovered planets or low-tech worlds, you can lean heavier into the details of overland trips. You might want to have the group Analyze their Environment, Navigate or Sense Direction daily, or Subsist if they run out of food or water.

Starship Travel Times

Starship travel is measured in hours or days. Standard starship engines can be used to go into orbit or land, travel point-to-point on a planet, travel to a planet's satellites and moons, and travel within a system. Drift engines enable hyperspace travel via the plane of the Drift and are used to travel within a system, or between distant systems. Using Drift engines, travel time is based on the region of space you wish to travel to: Near Space or the Vast. A planet is classified into these interstellar regions not by location, but by the number of Drift beacons in the vicinity. Thanks to the *Starstone*, Drift travel to Absalom Station is always swift, making it a galactic hub. While other galaxies exist, the distances between them and the galaxy of the Pact Worlds—known as Desna's Path—are so incredibly large that there have yet to be any confirmed instances of intergalactic travel.

Drift lanes first appeared in the aftermath of the Drift Crisis, a year during which the Drift was dangerously unstable. Drift lanes are essentially hyperspace highways through the Drift with consistent end points. They connect two locations in a chain and can't be used to rapidly reach other regions of space not on the chain, nor can they be entered at other locations. Some Drift lanes have one or more nodes along their route, which are early exits, similar to a highway's off-ramp. Like the Drift lane itself, these stops are consistent and don't change. Exiting at a node along a Drift lane shortens the overall travel time by an amount determined by you, likely by half or a third depending upon how many nodes are along a Drift lane's route. A starship that purposefully flies out of, or is knocked out of, a Drift lane is deposited in a random location in the Drift and must begin to Plot a Course through the Drift, as normal.

Typical travel times using standard engines, Drift engines, and Drift lanes are noted on the Starship Travel Time table below. These travel times are further modified by the result of a PC's check to Plot Course (*Player Core* 204).

STARSHIP TRAVEL TIME

Destination	Standard Engines	Drift Engines
Travel Point-to-Point on Planet	1d4 Hours	N/A
Go Into Orbit or Land	1 Hour	N/A
Reach Satellite from Orbit	1 Hour	N/A
Travel In-System	1d6+2 Days	1d6 Days
Travel to Absalom Station	N/A	1d6 Days
Travel to Near Space	N/A	3d6 Days
Travel to the Vast	N/A	5d6 Days
Travel a Drift Lane	N/A	7 Days
Travel Between Galaxies	Unknown	Unknown

Overland Travel Speed

Depending on how you track movement, the adventuring party might track the overland distance they travel in feet or miles based on the characters' Speeds with the relevant movement type. Typical rates are shown on the Travel Speed table. Groups traveling in vehicles instead use their vehicle's Speed, as noted in that vehicle's entry.

The rates on the Travel Speed table assume that the characters are traveling over flat and clear terrain at a determined pace, but one that's not exhausting. Moving through difficult terrain halves the listed movement rate. Greater difficult terrain reduces the distance traveled to one-third the listed amount. If the travel requires a skill check to accomplish, such as mountain climbing or swimming, you might call for a check once per hour, referencing the resulting distance on the Travel Speed table to determine the group's progress.

TRAVEL SPEED

Speed	Feet per Minute	Miles per Hour	Miles per Day
10 feet	100	1	8
15 feet	150	1-1/2	12
20 feet	200	2	16
25 feet	250	2-1/2	20



Speed	Feet per Minute	Miles per Hour	Miles per Day
30 feet	300	3	24
35 feet	350	3-1/2	28
40 feet	400	4	32
50 feet	500	5	40
60 feet	600	6	48

Navigating

The Navigate and Sense Direction activities enable characters to detect north, navigate complex paths, and plan a short journey. To plan an interstellar journey, characters instead Plot Course. You can combine these checks with Recalling Knowledge about the area–typically using Nature or Society–for the PCs to get their initial bearings or learn about important locations along their route. The DC for these checks is usually trained or expert but can be more challenging for unexplored or remote regions. Some of these locations might be useful, such as a transmission tower, a fruit tree, or a space station. Others might be mysterious or dangerous, such as an alien's hunting grounds, an asteroid, or an abandoned laboratory. It's best to point out two or three landmarks and let the group decide on their course from there.

Getting Lost

When PCs are traveling through space, exploring the wilderness, or navigating twisting city streets and space stations, they might get lost. This is usually a consequence for failing at checks to Navigate or Sense Direction, or critically failing at a check to Plot Course, but it can also happen based on the story, such as if they crash-land on an undiscovered planet, pass through an interstellar portal, or emerge from an underground passageway into a forest. Playing through the process of trying to find their way can be fun for a party, provided they do so for a short interval. If a party is lost at the start of a session, they should usually have found their way and reached a significant destination by the end.

If the PCs get unlucky or are just awful at Piloting and Survival, they might end up stuck with no way to reorient themselves. In these cases, have someone come to them! They might meet some locals, get captured by predators, or even stumble upon a dangerous location. They've figured out where they are, even if it's not where they wanted to be!

Encounters During Travel

You might want to include some encounters if the PCs are in a dangerous area, especially if they travel for a long time. For these encounters, choose creatures and characters that live in that type of environment. Remember that not all creatures attack on sight. An interactive scene with curious creatures, friendly travelers, or cautious locals all work well as travel encounters.

ADVERSE WEATHER AND TERRAIN

Exploration gets slower when the party faces dense jungles, deep snow, sandstorms, extreme heat, gravity wells, asteroid belts, or similar difficult conditions. You decide how much these factors impact the characters' progress. The specific effects of certain types of terrain and weather are described starting on page 92.

Difficult Terrain

Difficult terrain can slow progress during overland journeys but rarely lasts long enough to impact interstellar voyages. Unless it's important how far the group gets in a particular time frame, this can be covered with a quick description of chopping through the vines, trudging through a bog, or piloting through prolonged turbulence or a Drift storm. If the characters are on a deadline, adjust their speed on the Travel Speed table (page 37), typically by cutting it in half if almost all the land is difficult terrain or to one-third for greater difficult terrain.

Hazardous Terrain

Hazardous terrain, such as the caldera of an active volcano, might physically harm the PCs or their vehicles. The group might have the option to travel directly through or to go around by spending more time. You can transition into a more detailed scene while the characters move through hazardous terrain and attempt to mitigate the damage with spells or skill checks. If they endure hazardous terrain, consider giving the PCs a minor or moderate XP reward at the end of their exploration, with slightly more XP if they took smart precautions to avoid damage.

Environmental Hazards

Dangerous crevasses, quicksand, and similar dangers are environmental hazards, which are described beginning on page 92. Hazards that affect a starship instead use the cinematic starship combat system, described on page 226.

SURPRISE ATTACKS

Surprise attacks should be used sparingly, even in dangerous areas. The fact that PCs are usually in a group scares away most animals, and setting a watch can deter even more attackers. Surprise attacks are most likely if the PCs did something in advance that would lead to the ambush. For instance, they might be ambushed by mercenaries if they were flaunting their wealth earlier in the session, or they might be counterattacked by enemies if they attack the enemies first, only to retreat to rest. If the PCs set up camp hastily and decide not to set a watch, they might be in trouble if they're attacked. This should happen only in cases of extreme sloppiness, since if you take advantage of minor lapses, you might end up with a group that repeatedly spends an inordinate amount of time describing all their camping preparation to keep it from happening again. It's usually better to ask the PCs if they're setting up watches (page 43), rather than assume that their silence on the issue means they aren't.

STARTING ENCOUNTERS

If an encounter begins, shift to encounter mode by having everyone roll initiative, as described on page 24. Call for initiative once a trap is triggered, as soon as two opposing groups come into contact, or when a creature on one side decides to take action against the other. In some cases, a trap or a foe has a reaction that tells you to roll initiative. For instance, a complex trap that's triggered might make an attack with its reaction before the initiative order begins. In these cases, resolve all the results of the reaction before calling for initiative rolls.

FLESHING OUT EXPLORATION

The more narrative pace of exploration mode means that you, as the GM, have a lot of freedom to emphasize important parts of the adventure to your players through evocative language and dramatic timing.

EVOCATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

As the PCs explore, convey their surroundings by appealing to the players' senses. This sets the scene, gives them a better sense of their environment, and can be used to foreshadow what they might find ahead. When determining which details to cover, think about what's familiar versus novel. A new dungeon might have similar architecture to previous ones but feature ancient structures that set it apart. You can use the PCs' familiarity as a tool to single out what's new. When preparing for a game, imagine yourself in the environment and jot down a few notes about what you would sense. Conveying these details keeps the players on the same page about what they sense, even if each character responds to it differently.

Keep in mind that the more you explain something, the more important it seems. This is valuable for you to drive interest, but can also be a mixed blessing, since describing something inconsequential to set the mood can lead players off on a tangent. Sometimes, the best solution is to make that unimportant thing as important as the players think it is!

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

In exploration mode, each player who wants to do something beyond just traveling chooses an exploration activity for their character. The purpose of these activities within the game is to clarify what a PC focuses on as they explore rather than unrealistically allowing them to do everything simultaneously. This adds variety within the group's behavior and can show you where players want the story to go. For example, a player whose PC is Investigating wall carvings shows you that the player wants those to be informative.

Exploration activities that happen continually as the group explores are meant to be narrative first and foremost, with the player describing to you what they're doing, and then you determining which activity applies and describing any details or alterations for the situation. If a player says, "I'm Avoiding Notice," add more detail by asking what precautions they're taking or by telling them which passages they think are least guarded. Likewise, if a player says they're looking for traps *and* keeping their shield raised *and* covering the group's tracks, ask them which of these they're prioritizing to narrow down the activity. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of an activity given current circumstances. For instance, someone Scouting might trigger a laser turret before their group can reach them, or someone Investigating ancient alien carvings might critically fail and lead the party in the wrong direction. This doesn't apply for exploration activities that are discrete and occur when the group is taking a pause or zooming in on a particular action, such as Treat Wounds. Characters can always drop out of a continual

QUICK ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS

Aquatic

Sights choppy water, rolling waves, sunlight glinting, the curve of the horizon, driftwood
Sounds waves lapping against a ship, seabirds' cries, fluttering sails, creatures breaching the surface
Smells salt water, crisp fresh air, dead fish
Textures frigid water, slimy seaweed, crusty salt collecting on surfaces
Weather powerful winds, oncoming storms

Arctic

Sights blinding reflected sunlight, snowy plains, distant glaciers, deep crevasses, rocky cliffs, ice floes and bergs, animal tracks in snow
Sounds howling winds, drips of melting ice, utter quiet
Smells clean air, half-frozen bog, lichen, seaweed
Textures crunching snow, hard ice
Weather frigid gales, light snowfall, pounding blizzards

Forest

Sights towering trees, dense undergrowth, verdant canopies, colorful wildlife, dappled sunlight through the trees, mossy tree trunks, twisted roots
Sounds rustling leaves, snapping branches, animal calls
Smells decomposing vegetation, flowering plants, pine trees, earthy mushrooms
Textures leaves crunching underfoot, scraping branches, water dripping from above, rough bark
Weather still air, cool shade, sporadic breeze, rain on the canopy, branches coated in thick snow

Mountain

Sights bare cliffs, snow caps, hardy trees, slopes littered with scree, birds flying on currents, fog among the peaks
Sounds howling wind, falling rocks, clear echoes, crunch of rocks underfoot, distant avalanche
Smells blowing dust, pine trees, fresh snow
Textures rough stone, powdery snow, unstable rubble
Weather swirling clouds, chill of high altitude, direct sunlight, powerful wind and rain

Plains

Sights grass waving gently, scattered wildflowers, rocky outcroppings or boulders, the curve of the horizon
Sounds rustling wind, birdsong, distant sounds carried far
Smells fresh air, earthy soil, distant carcasses
Textures touch of tall grass, rasp of scrub brush, crunch of dry dirt
Weather cooling of gentle wind, heat of direct sunlight, massive black thunderclouds

Swamp

Sights lush leaves, clouds of insects, algae-coated water, shacks on stilts, darting fish
Sounds croaking frogs, chirping insects, bubbling, splashing
Smells rich moss and algae, pungent swamp gases
Textures pushing through floating detritus, tangling creepers, thick mud
Weather oppressive humidity, still air, pouring rain, rays of sunlight

Underground

Sights winding passages, sputtering yellow torchlight, uneven or cracked floors, ancient writings or architecture, mining equipment, stalagmites and stalactites
Sounds dripping condensation, scurrying rats or insects, distant clunks of machinery, tinny echoes of your voices and footsteps
Smells staleness of still air, sulfur, tang of metal deposits
Textures rough rock walls, erosion-smoothed stone, cobwebs
Weather chill of underground air, geothermal heat

Urban

Sights busy streets, crowded corridors, shady alleys, street vendors, traffic jams, neon lights, towering skyscrapers, dilapidated tenements, idyllic neighborhoods, holo ads, street signs, graffiti
Sounds arguments, laughter, overlapping conversation, music, yappy pets, honking vehicles, sirens, noisy machinery
Smells cooking food, pollution, trash, sewage
Textures smooth sidewalks and streets, weatherworn building exteriors, polished floors
Weather foggy streets, smoggy skies, heavy rain, blinding sunlight reflecting off glass

Vacuum

Sights void of space, swirling colors of the Drift, distant stars, satellites, asteroids, planets, starship corridors, artificial lights
Sounds hum of air filtration, clanking machinery, blaring alarm, utter silence of a vacuum
Smells staleness of recycled air, damp hydroponic garden, sterile medbay, chemicals
Textures humidity inside a space suit, metal grating, pitted starship hull, condensation, smooth plastic, greasy machinery
Weather artificial atmosphere, decompressed starship, vacuum, Drift storm, nebula, solar flare, gravity well, asteroids

MONITORING SPELL DURATIONS

Spell durations are approximate values that codify the eccentricities of magic into a convenient number. However, that doesn't mean you can set your watch by a spell with a 1-hour duration. This is one of the reasons the passage of time outside of encounters is in your hands and isn't as precise as encounter rounds. If a question arises about whether a spell has expired, you make the call. You shouldn't be punitive, but you also shouldn't treat characters like they move with clockwork precision and perfect efficiency between encounters.

There are two times these durations matter most: when players try to fit multiple encounters within the duration of a spell, and when they want to use a spell before a fight and keep it in effect during the encounter.

Multiple Encounters

A 1-minute spell should last for multiple encounters only if the encounters happen in very close proximity (usually in two adjoining rooms) and if the PCs go directly from one fight to the next without leaving encounter mode. If they want to stop and heal, or if the party debates whether to go on, the process takes enough time that the spell runs out.

Be more generous with spells lasting 10 minutes or more. A 10-minute spell easily lasts for one encounter and could continue for another if the locations are close. A 1-hour spell usually lasts for several encounters.

Before a Fight

Casting advantageous spells before a fight (sometimes called "pre-buffing") gives the characters a big advantage since they can spend more combat rounds on offensive actions instead of preparatory ones. If the players have the drop on their foes, you usually can let each character cast one spell or prepare in some similar way, then roll initiative.

Casting preparatory spells before combat becomes a problem when it feels rote and the players assume it will always work—that sort of planning can't hold up in every situation! In many cases, the act of casting spells reveals the party's presence. In cases where the PCs' preparations could give them away, you might roll for initiative before everyone can complete their preparations.

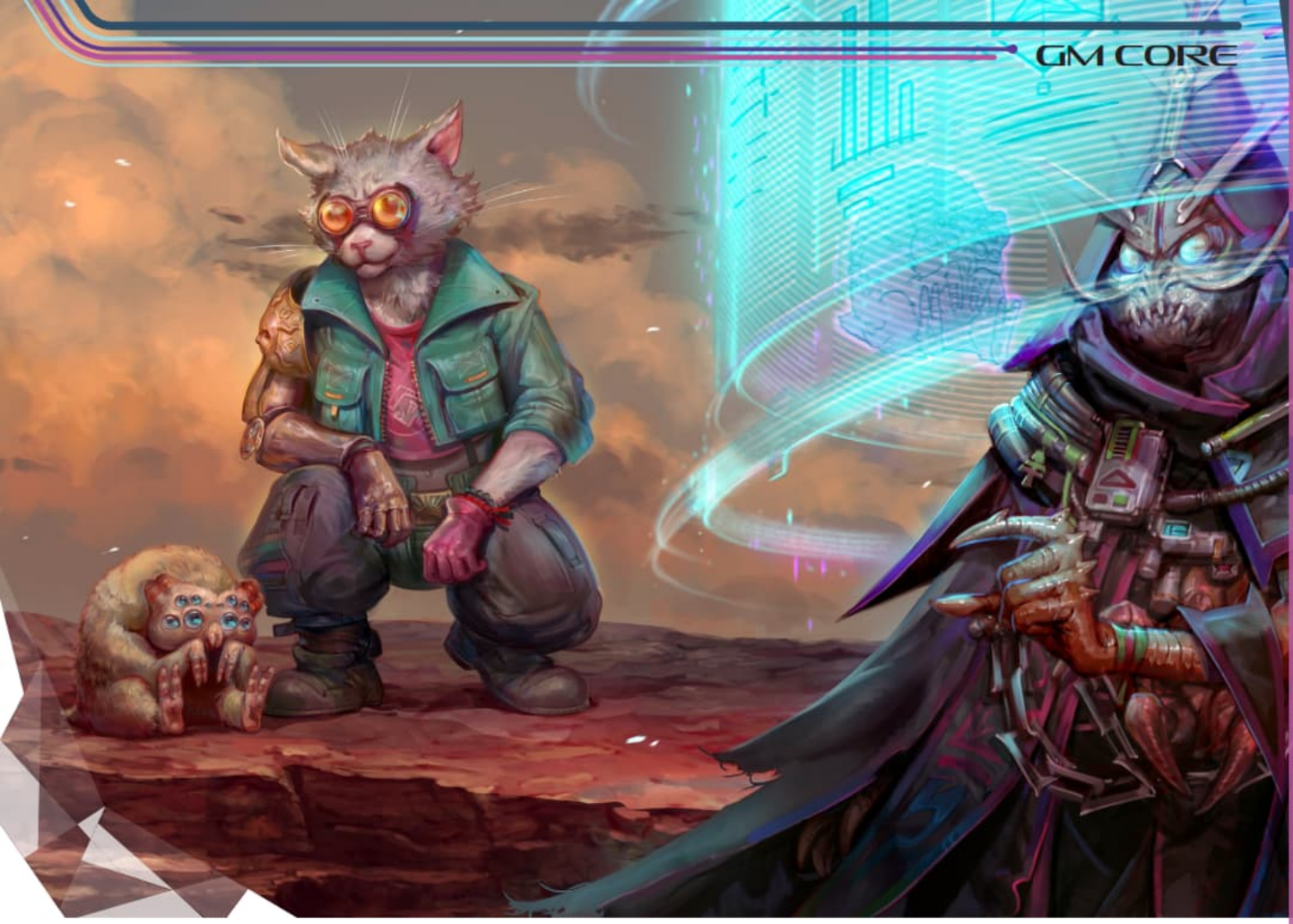
exploration activity to perform a discrete one (even if they are fatigued and can't sustain an exploration activity as they travel), and they can change activities at any time.

The main exploration activities described in *Player Core* (pages 430–432) and what PCs can accomplish with them are as follows.

- **Analyze Environment:** Check for hazards (*Player Core* 430).
- **Avoid Notice (Stealth):** Sneak around undetected (*Player Core* 430).
- **Defend:** Keep a shield raised (*Player Core* 430).
- **Detect Magic:** Repeat the *detect magic* spell (*Player Core* 324, advice on page 41).
- **Follow the Expert:** Improve your bonus with another tactic by following an ally's example (*Player Core* 431, advice on page 41).
- **Hustle:** Travel faster (*Player Core* 431).
- **Install Upgrade:** Use a repair toolkit to upgrade items (*Player Core* 431).
- **Investigate:** Recall Knowledge of your surroundings (*Player Core* 431, advice on page 42).
- **Livestream:** Broadcast or record footage (*Player Core* 432).
- **Recharge:** Charge a battery (*Player Core* 432).
- **Repeat a Spell:** Cast or sustain a spell over and over (*Player Core* 432).
- **Scout:** Look ahead for danger (*Player Core* 432).
- **Search (Perception):** Seek out hidden things as you travel (*Player Core* 432, advice on page 42).

Skills also have exploration activities linked to them.

- **Access Infosphere (Computers):** Search local networks for information (*Player Core* 195, advice on page 41).
- **Borrow an Arcane Spell (Arcana):** Prepare a spell from someone else's spellbook (*Player Core* 193).
- **Coerce (Intimidation):** Threaten a creature so it does what you want (*Player Core* 200).
- **Cover Tracks (Survival):** Obscure the PC's passing (*Player Core* 208).
- **Decipher Writing (Varies):** Understand archaic, esoteric, or obscure texts (*Player Core* 186).
- **Gather Information (Diplomacy):** Canvass the area to learn about a specific individual or topic (*Player Core* 199, DCs page 54).
- **Hack (Computers):** Access, control, or make changes to a secure computer system (*Player Core* 196).
- **Identify Magic (Varies):** Learn about a magic item, location, or ongoing effect (*Player Core* 188, DCs page 54).
- **Impersonate (Deception):** Create a disguise (*Player Core* 198).
- **Implant Augmentation (Medicine):** Use a medkit to implant augmentations (*Player Core* 431).
- **Learn a Spell (Varies):** Use the skill corresponding to the spell's tradition to gain access to a new spell (*Player Core* 189, DCs page 54).
- **Make an Impression (Diplomacy):** Make a good impression on someone (*Player Core* 199).
- **Navigate (Piloting):** Plan a short journey overland or in space (*Player Core* 204).
- **Plot Course (Piloting):** Plan a long journey in space (*Player Core* 204).
- **Repair (Crafting):** Using a repair toolkit, fix a damaged item (*Player Core* 196).
- **Sense Direction (Survival):** Get a sense of where the PC is or determine the cardinal directions (*Player Core* 208).
- **Squeeze (Acrobatics):** Squeeze through very tight spaces (*Player Core* 192).
- **Track (Survival):** Find and follow creatures' tracks (*Player Core* 208, DCs page 55).



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- **Treat Wounds (Medicine):** Treat a living creature's wounds (*Player Core* 202).

Here are some useful things to keep in mind when adjudicating a few specific exploration activities.

ACCESS INFOSPHERE

Be generous with what you allow your players to discover information on, but don't go in depth with this information. If a character learns everything they need to know off the infosphere, they won't bother interacting with the rest of the setting! It's best to use Access Infosphere to give general information, guidance, and clues to your players and to direct them to other NPCs and locations relevant to the adventure–this makes Access Infosphere a useful tool for everyone.

A character can't retry a check to Access Infosphere, but they can perform a follow-up search based on newly discovered information. If a player is slowing down the game with their incessant searches, tell that player they've found all they're capable of discovering from the infosphere for now, and consider decreasing the amount of information you provide in the future.

DETECT MAGIC

This activity doesn't enable characters to automatically find every single magical aura or object during travel. Hazards that require a minimum proficiency can't be found with *detect magic*, nor can illusions of equal or higher rank than the spell.

When characters find something magical using this activity, let them know and give them the option to stop and explore further or continue on. Stopping brings you into a more roleplay-heavy scene in which players can search through an area, assess different items, or otherwise try to figure out the source of the magic and what it does. Continuing on might cause the group to miss out on beneficial magic items or trigger a magic trap.

FOLLOW THE EXPERT

Follow the Expert is a truly versatile activity that lets a PC who's lacking at a skill or exploration activity have a better chance to succeed. It provides a good way to help a character with a low Stealth modifier sneak around, to get a character with poor Athletics up a steep cliff, and so on. Usually, a character who's Following the Expert can't perform other exploration activities or follow more than one person at a time.

It's important that this doesn't become too rote. Let the players decide how one of them is helping the other. The description can give you more to work with and add flavor to the exploration beyond just the mechanics. Also, if one PC helps another in the same way over and over, that could be a sign of character growth. If the envoy has helped the soldier Avoid Notice over and over, the soldier is essentially receiving training in Stealth at that point and might want to consider taking or retraining a skill increase to make that true. Connections like these can breathe life into the characters and their relationships, and it can help promote camaraderie and interactions between characters.



INVESTIGATE

As with Detecting Magic, the initial result of Investigating is usually enough to give the investigator a clue that leads to a more thorough examination, but it rarely gives all possible information. For instance, a character might note that the walls of a bedroom are covered with occult symbols, but they would need to stop to read the text or even determine that it's written in blood.

SEARCH

With a successful Perception check while Searching, a character notices the presence or absence of something unusual in the area, but this doesn't provide a comprehensive catalog of everything there. Instead, it gives a jumping-off point for closer inspection or an encounter. For instance, if an area has both a DC 30 secret door and a DC 25 trap, and a Searching character got a 28 on their Perception check, you would tell the player that their character noticed a trap in the area, and you'd give a rough idea of the trap's location and nature. The party needs to examine the area more closely to learn specifics about the trap, and someone would need to Search again to get another chance to find the secret door.

If an area contains many objects or something that will take a while to search (such as a computer full of files), Searching would reveal the computer, but the PCs would have to examine it more thoroughly to check the files.

You roll a secret Perception check for a Searching character to detect any secrets they pass that are hidden in a place that stands out (such as near a door or a turn in a corridor), but not one in a more inconspicuous place (like a random point in a hallway) unless they're searching particularly slowly and meticulously.

The rules for Searching deliberately avoid giving intricate detail on how long a search takes. That's left in your hands because the circumstances of a search can vary widely. If the group isn't in any danger and has time for a very thorough search, that's a good time to allow them to automatically succeed, rather than bothering to roll, or you might have them roll to see how long it takes before they find what they're looking for, ultimately finding it eventually no matter the result. Conversely, if they stop for a thorough search in a dangerous location, their efforts might draw unwanted attention!

PCs might get to attempt another check if their initial search fails. It's best to tie this to taking a different tactic. Just saying "I search it again" isn't enough, but if a PC tries a different method or has other tools at their disposal, it could work. Be generous with what you allow, as long as the player puts thought into it! If you know a search isn't going to turn up anything useful, make that clear early so the group doesn't waste too much time on it. If they're determined to keep going—which they often are—you might have them find something useful but minor in the search.

IMPROVISING NEW ACTIVITIES

The list of exploration activities isn't exhaustive. More appear in special subsystems and adventures, and you'll often need to create your own. When making your own, it's usually fine to just consider whether the effort required is comparable to the other

exploration activities and go from there. If you're having trouble, find a comparable activity. For example, if the PCs are Swimming as they explore, consider that travel speeds are based on the equivalent of 1 action per 6 seconds, and that other exploration activities the PCs can keep up without getting tired are generally based on alternating between 2 actions per 12 seconds, averaging to 1 action per 6 seconds. (Defend, for example, is based on using 1 action to Stride then 1 to Raise your Shield, which is why the PC moves at half Speed.) Hustle is a good example of an activity that can't be done indefinitely, so you can use it as a model for strenuous activities where the PCs are using the equivalent of 2 actions every 6 seconds.

When improvising an exploration activity, consider some advantages and disadvantages of that activity to inspire you. What else might the PC be neglecting while doing this activity? How does it interplay with activities that the rest of the party uses? If the new activity seems like it's a better option than other activities all or nearly all the time, chances are you might want to adjust it so it's more balanced.

SETTING A PARTY ORDER

In exploration mode, it often matters which characters are in the front or back of the party formation. Let the players decide among themselves where in the group their characters are while exploring. This order can determine who gets attacked first when enemies or traps threaten from various directions. It's up to you to determine who gets targeted based on the situation.

When you come out of exploration mode, the group usually remains in the same general formation. Decide the PCs' exact positions, with their input, if you're moving to a grid. If they come out of exploration mode on their own terms, they can move around as they see fit. For example, if they detect a trap and the operative starts attempting to disarm it, the other characters can move to whatever locations they think are safe.

RESTING

Characters require 8 hours of sleep each day, and they can gain the benefits of resting only once every 24 hours. A character who rests for 8 hours recovers in the following ways.

- The character regains Hit Points equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum 1) multiplied by their level. If they rest without any shelter or comfort, you might reduce this healing by half (to a minimum of 1 HP).
- The character loses the fatigued condition.
- The character reduces the severity of the doomed and drained conditions by 1.
- Most spellcasters need to rest before they regain their spells for the day.

A group in exploration mode can attempt to rest, but they aren't entirely safe from danger, and their rest might be interrupted. The 8 hours of rest don't need to be consecutive, however, and after an interruption, characters can go back to sleep.

Sleeping in armor results in poor rest and causes a character to wake up fatigued. If a character would've recovered from fatigue, sleeping in armor prevents it.

If a character goes more than 16 hours without going to sleep, they become fatigued.

Taking long-term rest for faster recovery is part of downtime and can't be done during exploration. See page 50 for these rules.

WATCHES AND SURPRISE ATTACKS

Adventuring parties usually put a few people on guard to watch out for danger while the others rest. Spending time on watch also interrupts sleep, so a watch schedule needs to account for everyone's time on guard duty. The Watches and Rest table indicates how long the group needs to set aside for rest, assuming everyone gets a rotating watch assignment of equal length.

If a surprise encounter would occur during rest, you can roll a die to randomly determine which character is on watch at the time. All characters roll initiative; sleeping characters typically roll Perception with a –4 status penalty for being unconscious. They don't automatically wake up when rolling initiative, but they might roll a Perception check to wake up at the start of their turn due to noise. If a savvy enemy waits for a particularly vulnerable character to take watch before attacking, the attack can happen on that character's watch automatically. However, you might have the ambusher attempt a Stealth check against all characters' Perception DCs to see if anyone noticed its approach.

WATCHES AND REST

Groups Size	Total Time	Duration of Each Watch
2	16 hours	8 hours
3	12 hours	4 hours
4	10 hours, 40 minutes	2 hours, 40 minutes
5	10 hours	2 hours
6	9 hours, 36 minutes	1 hour, 36 minutes

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS

Modern armor has built-in environmental protections that, when activated, protect characters from the dangerous environmental effects of a vacuum and facilitate self-contained breathing. These basic environmental protections allow characters to survive and breathe in thick or thin atmospheres, in space, and underwater. They don't protect characters from other inhaled threats, such as smoke. Armor can maintain environmental protections for a number of days equal to the armor's item level (minimum 1 day).

STARVATION AND THIRST

When creatures can't eat or drink enough to survive comfortably, they're fatigued until they do. After a number of days without water equal to a creature's Constitution modifier + 1, the creature takes 1d4 damage each hour that can't be healed until it quenches its thirst. After the same amount of time without food, it takes 1 damage each day that can't be healed until it eats.



RUNNING DOWNTIME

There's more to life than fighting aliens and getting rich. What happens when a PC wins a deed to a dance club in a game of chance using the infinity deck, crafts an item, launches a celebrity career, or pursues a relationship? All these goals and more are resolved by running downtime. Downtime is the space between adventures, where your PCs take a step back before the next chapter starts. In downtime, you can sum up the important events of a whole day with just one roll. Use this mode when the characters return home or otherwise aren't adventuring.

Usually, downtime is a few minutes at the start of a session or a break between major chapters of an adventure. On rare occasions, you might have a whole session of downtime to play out a specific story. As with exploration, you might punctuate downtime with roleplaying or encounters when it's natural to do so.

- **Stakes:** None to low. Downtime is the counterpart to adventuring and covers low-risk activities.
- **Time Scale:** Downtime can last days, weeks, months, or years in the game world in just a few minutes of real time at your game table.
- **Actions and Reactions:** If you need to use actions and reactions, switch to exploration or encounter mode. A creature that can't act is unable to perform most downtime activities, but it can take long-term rest.

DEPTH OF DOWNTIME

Determine how involved your group wants downtime to be at the start of the game. If your players vary greatly in preference, you might need to find a middle ground, or some way to give the players least interested in downtime something they would find compelling. You can adjust downtime depth as the game goes along, and you might find it becomes more important to the players as their connection to the setting grows stronger.

Pay attention to the amount of real-world time you spend in downtime and the level of detail. Downtime should rarely last a whole session. Usually, a half hour between significant adventures is about right, and 15 minutes for shorter lulls in the action, such as when PCs return to a port of call briefly in the middle of an adventure. You can extend this time as needed for more detailed roleplaying scenes.

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For the level of detail, it's important to give more than just an overview, but often the basics will do. "A fleet of ships await boarding clearance, and a uniformed vesk officer puts you to work double-checking manifests" might do for using Piloting to Earn Income, and "Your shipment of UPBs arrives late, but you're able to complete the armor" could be enough for Crafting. Go deeper if the player sets out to do something specific or asks questions you think have potential for an interesting story, but be careful with too much detail, as you run the risk of boring most of the table with minutiae.

GROUP ENGAGEMENT

One major challenge of downtime is keeping the whole group involved. When you can, combine multiple people's tasks into one. For instance, if one PC wants to Earn Income with Performance and another wants to work as a medic, you might say that a Steward battleship is stopping briefly in the same port, seeking entertainment and treatment for injuries their group suffered engaging the Swarm. That means you can put both PCs in the same scene. You can also look for downtime activities that affect multiple characters' interests. For instance, if the operative's contact from the Golden League wants a special augmentation, a different PC might Craft that augmentation. This lets those PCs help each other more directly. If the soldier's player doesn't plan to do anything in downtime, you might let the soldier Aid another character in crafting weapons—finding blueprints on the infosphere and sorting parts and tools, for instance.

If a player really isn't interested in downtime, they might not want to engage at all. In that case, it's best to shorten the time you spend on downtime and give their actions a one-sentence description. If other players want a deeper downtime experience, consider extending game sessions or running side sessions for just those players.

CAMPAIGNS WITHOUT DOWNTIME

There are two ways you might end up with a game that has no downtime: no time and no interest. In the first, the story moves along so quickly that the PCs don't really have time to engage with downtime. Think of it like a breakneck action movie, where the characters barely have time to breathe before they're on to the next challenge, and even the end of an adventure is a cliffhanger.

In the second, you and the other players just don't care about downtime at all. It doesn't interest you. In this case, just summarize what happens between adventures and skip using any downtime rules.

If you skip downtime, you might not need to adjust your game. The money PCs can earn during downtime is minor compared to what they can gain through adventures. However, the PCs will have less choice in what items they get if they don't Craft or earn extra money to buy items.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Downtime is more satisfying when the PCs work toward long-term goals rather than perform disconnected tasks. You can ask players what their PCs' goals are, and also look for storylines they're interested in that you can use as seeds for long-term goals. Long-term goals might include running a business, befriending their starship's artificial intelligence, establishing an arcane academy, returning a species from the brink of extinction, running for political office, or becoming a pop star. If players don't have clear ideas for their goals, look at their backgrounds, NPCs they know, and things they've expressed interest in during adventures to develop some suggestions. Remember that you're not trying to get them to accept your exact suggestions but to pick a goal they really like.

Long-term goals should shape the game, and reinforcing their progress is key. Show changes, good and bad, that result from the PCs' efforts, both in downtime and on their adventures if applicable. This doesn't have to be subtle! You can directly say, "You've been trying to get an audition with a media label, but the infosphere gossip campaign orchestrated by your rival diva means nobody's calling you back."

Think ahead in stages. For instance, if a PC wants to be a pop star, you might have them...

- Start by performing on the infosphere as a virtual avatar.
- Get enough fans that you plan a live show.
- Sell so many tickets you book another concert at a bigger venue.
- Get a small but loyal following.
- Sign with a media label.
- You're invited to perform with Strawberry Machine Cake as the opening act in their upcoming galactic tour!

And so on. You can deliver each of these details through a little vignette. For example, if you use the fifth bullet point, you might describe the bodyguards, manager, and other label staff as NPCs in later downtime activities or skill encounters.

GM PRIORITIES

Just because your PCs aren't exploring lost ruins or defeating villains during downtime mode doesn't mean it shouldn't be interesting or advance the story. The following tips might come in handy for running downtime mode.

- Demonstrate changes to the setting that result from the PCs' previous achievements, giving them time to breathe and appreciate what they've accomplished.
- Emphasize the PCs' planning and the fruit it bears.
- Avoid bogging the game down, even if a great deal of time passes. Keep the number of rolls small.
- Bring back compelling NPCs or plot threads established in previous downtime or adventures.
- Interject interesting events and scenes related to what the PCs do to make the world feel more alive.
- Switch to encounter or exploration mode as needed when actions spur a new scene or adventure.

Downtime goals are a great way to weave the PCs' agency into the story.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Success at a reasonable long-term goal should be likely, but not guaranteed. Give the player an expectation of how likely their goal is to work out based on how ambitious it is. Be clear about how much downtime it will take compared to the amount of downtime you expect the party will get during your campaign. Then, let the player decide how to commit their downtime and to which tasks.

Repeated failures or outside problems could lead to the whole goal failing. It happens! But give the player a fair chance. Even if their goal is really hard to achieve—like driving the undead out of Eox—there's a chance they might find a way. Don't undermine their efforts or ideas, but *do* make clear the magnitude of the task they've chosen. Remember that even if a goal fails, the effort was worthwhile, and the PCs might still achieve smaller successes along the way that open up new goals. For instance, the PCs might not succeed at driving all the undead out of Eox, but in the process, they might discover part of a powerful ritual that might restore the planet's ecosystem and allow living beings to thrive without environmental protections, if it can somehow be reassembled.

A failure or a success at a long-term goal can be a major emotional beat for the character. They've changed the world, after all! Don't shortchange it just because it happened in downtime. In fact, because it might have taken place over multiple sessions, the player might have been looking forward to the results for a really long time!

PLAYING OUT A DOWNTIME DAY

At the start of a given day of downtime, have all the players declare what their characters are trying to accomplish that day. You can then resolve one character's efforts at a time (or group some characters together, if they're cooperating on a single project). Some activities, such as Earning Income, require only a simple roll and some embellishment from you and the player. Other activities are more involved, incorporating encounters or exploration. You can call on the players to play out their downtime activities in any order, though it's often best to do the simplest ones first. Players who aren't part of a more involved activity might have time to take a break from the table while the more complex activities are played out.

Characters can undertake their daily preparations if they want, just as they would on a day of exploration. Ask players to establish a standard set of preparations, and you can assume the characters go through the same routine every day unless their players say otherwise.

COOPERATION

Multiple characters can cooperate on the same downtime task. If it's a simple task that requires just one check, such as a party Subsisting as they await rescue on a wild planet in the Vast, one character rolls the necessary check while everyone else Aids that character. If it's a complex task, assume all of them are working on different parts of it at one time, so all their efforts count toward its completion. For example, a party might collaborate to build a starship, with one character drawing up blueprints, one scavenging for parts in junkyards, and the other working on the ship's computer systems.

CHECKS

Some downtime activities require rolls, typically skill checks. Because these rolls represent the culmination of a series of tasks over a long period, players can't use most abilities or spells that manipulate die rolls, such as activating a magic item to gain a bonus or casting a fortune spell to roll twice. Constant benefits still apply, though, so someone might invest a magic item that gives them a bonus without requiring activation. You might make specific exceptions to this rule. If something could apply constantly, or so often that it might as well be constant, it's more likely to be used for downtime checks; for instance, Assurance could apply.

LONGER PERIODS OF DOWNTIME

Running downtime during a long time off—like several weeks, months, or even years—can be more challenging. However, it's also an opportunity for the characters to progress toward long-term plans rather than worrying about day-to-day activities. Because so much time is involved, characters don't roll a check for each day. Instead, they deal with a few special events, average out the rest of the downtime, and expend any resources, such as crafting materials.

EVENTS

After the characters state what they want to achieve in their downtime, select a few standout events for each of them—usually one event for a period of a week or a month, or four events for a year or longer. These events should be tailored to each character and their goals, and they can serve as hooks for adventures or plot development. A character using Perform to Earn Income could produce a livestream for a local idol whose producer had to go offworld (who end up so impressed that they give the party their next quest). Someone using Crafting might get a lucrative commission to craft a special item (that turns out to be the key to an alien starship in the next session). A character with Lore might have to research a difficult problem (uncovering signs of an impending cataclysm that will need the PCs to act if it's to be averted).

PCs who want to do things that don't correspond to a specific downtime activity should still experience downtime events; you just choose the relevant skill and DC. For example, if a character intends to build a computer, you might decide constructing the machine and setting system preferences once construction is finished are major events. The first could be a Crafting check, and the second a Computers check.

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AVERAGE PROGRESS

For long periods of downtime, you might not want to roll for every week, or even every month. Instead, set the level for one task using the lowest level the character can reliably find in the place where they spend their downtime (see Difficulty Classes on page 52 for more on setting task levels). If the character fails this check, you might allow them to try again after a week (or a month, if you're dealing with years of downtime). Don't allow them to roll again if they succeeded but want to try for a critical success, unless they do something in the story of the game that you think makes it reasonable to allow a new roll.

The events you include during a long stretch of downtime should typically feature higher-level tasks than the baseline. For instance, a character Earning Income with Piloting for 4 months might work at a port doing 1st-level tasks most of the time, but have 1 week of 3rd-level tasks to account for busy periods. You'll normally have the player roll once for the time they spent at 1st-level tasks and once for the week of 3rd-level tasks.

TASKS AND EVENTS

Players will often look to you for tasks they might take on during downtime, especially if they're looking to Earn Income. You should also interject special events to surprise your players and add interesting scenes. If you need some quick ideas for tasks characters might offer a PC, look at the tables below for inspiration. The Earn Income tasks are arranged with tasks appropriate for low-level PCs first, but most can be adapted to the level you need. For the events, you might need to "zoom in" to focus on a special scene or even a short encounter or adventure.

EARN INCOME TASKS

Art, Library, Other Educational Lore
Work at a library, museum, or school
Compile information on another world for an expedition
Conduct lectures on the infosphere
Acquire a rare object that predates the Gap for a collector

Augmentation Lore
Try to develop new augmentations or refurbish old ones
Volunteer to try experimental augmentations
Help patients get used to their new augmentations

Cooking Lore
Compete in a cooking competition
Livestream cooking tutorials on the infosphere
Find rare alien ingredients that can't be synthesized

Corporate Lore
Get an entry-level job at a major corporation
Become a recruiter or manager for a major corporation
Conduct corporate espionage for the highest bidder

Crafting
Make handicrafts to sell on the infosphere
Sew a costume for an influencer going to a convention
Scavenge a local junkyard for working electronics

Gambling Lore
Get lucky in a casino
Run a betting pool for a local brutaris league
Operate a site that buys, opens, and sells collectibles

Infosphere Lore
Work as an IT professional helping people with tech
Find deals on the infosphere and resell the items for profit
Create, host, or administrate content on the infosphere

Legal Lore
Clear some minor red tape
Bring a corporation to justice through the legal system
Find loopholes in an EULA written by a devil

Life Science Lore
Help care for exotic animals at a local shelter
Give a lecture at a local university about xenobiology
Develop a new painless way to install a specific biotech augmentation

Mining Lore
Work a shift in a local crystal mine
Determine the exact composition of a composite starmetal
Help develop a plan to mine out a newly discovered asteroid

Performance
Play vidgame theme songs on a street corner
Livestream on the infosphere
Get a gig as a backup singer for a pop star

Piracy Lore
Sell shipping information to local pirates
Smuggle and sell stolen goods without getting caught
Recognize crew emblems and recall the history of piracy

Sports Lore
Become a player in a professional brutaris league
Sell merchandise or scalp tickets in front of a sports arena
Help condition and train athletes

Underworld Lore
Track down stolen items or missing people
Make a deal with the head of a crime syndicate
Smuggle a shipment of pirated goods into a port

Vidgame Lore
Livestream games as a professional vidgamer
Design, develop, and program your own vidgame
Charge for "gear runs" to help people beat a popular game

Warfare Lore
Teach a doshko fighting class at a dojo
Join one side of a conflict as a mercenary or gun for hire
Train fleet officers in military maneuvers and stratagems

DOWNTIME EVENTS

Craft or Earn Income (Crafting)
A shipment of important materials is delayed, and the PC must track it down.
The PC creates a superlative work, which draws the attention of a collector or thief.

Create a Forgery (Society)
The legal format the PC is attempting to mimic gets changed, and they must adjust.
A mysterious benefactor gifts the PC special information but suggests they'll ask for a favor later to reciprocate.

Earn Income (General)
A fussy client demands dramatic changes throughout the process.
An accident at a work site puts someone in danger.
Something the PC is working on becomes a fad or hit—demand skyrockets!
A tourist is impressed with the PC's work and offers them a more lucrative task on a faraway planet.
Conditions on the job site are abysmal, and other workers ask the PC to join them in confronting the corporation.

Earn Income (Performance)
The PC launches their debut tour, becoming busier and more popular than ever!
A popular infosphere channel finances a special performance but demands some changes to the contents.
One of the PC's fellow performers doesn't show up, but the show must go on!

Subsist (Survival)
Over a long time subsisting in a single area, the PC finds a rare berry or herb that could be useful for making a new medicine.
The PC finds signs indicating some large creature has been foraging as well—possibly a monster.

Program (Computers)
An update to your computer systems makes your program unstable on any system connected to the infosphere.
You need help finishing a program, and the only programmer willing to help has a shady background.
A megacorporation steals your idea and demands you cease your operations unless you can prove the computer program was stolen.

Buy and Sell Items
The PC buys or sells a stolen item and is pursued by the organization looking to get it back at any cost.
A vendor sells the PC a dangerous fake item.

Buy and Sell Items
An online vendor has the item the PC wants but won't ship it, requiring them to pick it up and smuggle it back home.

Retrain
Tapping into new magical powers inflicts a curse or creates an odd phenomenon.
The vids the PCs have been using to train were fraudulent and resulted in an injury during their physical training.

ITEMS

After an adventure yields a windfall, the characters might have a number of items they want to sell. Likewise, when they're flush with currency, they might want to stock up on gear. It usually takes 1 hour of downtime to sell off a few goods or shop around to buy a couple items. It can take longer to sell off a large number of goods, expensive items, illegal goods, or items that aren't in high demand.

An item can usually be purchased at its full Price and sold for half its Price. Supply and demand can affect these numbers, but only occasionally. However, the game leaves it up to you to determine what items the PCs can and can't purchase and the final market Price for them. Settlements the size of a town or bigger typically have at least one vendor for basic, common gear, and even magic and pharmaceutical items of 1st level. Beyond that, it all depends on how much you want to allow the players to determine their abilities and how much verisimilitude you want in your game. If the settlement has access to a planetwide infosphere, it's usually possible for your PCs to find what they need that way, even if it takes 1-2 days for their item to be delivered via courier or drone. You can set the specifics where you need, but let's look at three possibilities.

PCs can buy what they want where they want. You gloss over the details of markets. PCs can sell whatever they want for half the Price and buy any item to which they have access at full Price. This approach is focused on expediency over verisimilitude and is likely to reduce the number of unusual or distinctive items the PCs have, as many players seek out the ones that most directly support their characters' strengths. This still means there's a limit on purchasing uncommon or rarer items, but you could even do away with rarity if your group wants, or add a surcharge instead (depending on your group's play style, that could be anywhere from 10% to 100% for uncommon items, and 25% to 500% if you also want to open up all rare items).

PCs can buy what they want but must put in additional effort. If they want to sell or buy items, PCs must be in a location where the markets can support that. They can usually sell a single item for half its Price, but the Price for selling something already plentiful on the market could be as low as 25% (or they can ship it to a buyer in another market, if they can find one, making 40% of the item's Price after paying for shipping). Buying an item usually costs the full Price; buying higher-level items (or uncommon items if they're available at all) requires seeking out a special vendor or NPC and can take extra time, representing getting the item shipped to the PCs.

They might be unable to find the item at all even after their time investment, based on the settlement's parameters. This approach allows PCs to determine some of their items, but it forces them to really work to get more powerful items and discourages looting every enemy to sell off fairly ordinary armor. This can be the most work for you but can make the world feel diverse and complex.

High-end markets are rare or nonexistent. PCs get what they find in adventures and can Craft their own items, if you allow them to get formulas in some way. If you have high-end marketplaces at all, their selections are small. They sell items at full Price and have difficulty attaining the funds to buy more items. They might purchase items for half of the Price but are far more selective about what they take. If you use this approach, PCs are far more likely to use strange items they find but might be dissatisfied or even underpowered depending on what items you give them. Even in this style of game, you might want to allow them to get upgraded weapons and armor fairly easily, or make sure you award those on a regular basis.

Universal Polymer Base Conversion: You can reduce the amount of time it takes for PCs to sell items by allowing PCs to reduce the items to UPBs. These services can be found at most major settlements and allows the conversion of any tech gear into its base components, resulting in 50% of the equipment's value in UPBs. You might lower the redeemed value up to 10% to represent the cost of using the facilities or the material lost in the process. Magitech and magic gear will only give up to 25% of the item's value, as most of the cost of those items is in the magic that's lost in the process of converting the items to UPBs.

MONEY IN DOWNTIME

While the amount of credits the PCs can earn during short periods of downtime is significantly less than the value of the loot they gain while adventuring, it can still serve as a satisfying bonus. The PCs might use their credits to outfit themselves better, donate it toward a good cause, or pool it together to save for a major purchase. If you find that a PC tends to forget about their credits or save it up more cautiously than they really need to, offer them rewarding opportunities to spend it. For instance, they might be approached to contribute to a charity in desperate need or sponsor an artist looking for a patron.

INVESTMENTS

The downtime system isn't meant to deal with investing credits, receiving interest, or the like just to make more credits. Rather, investing should result in changes in the universe. PCs might invest in founding a museum and find on their return that the collection has grown. If they fund an expedition, they might get access to interesting trade goods later on.

When characters are investing in a major endeavor, the amount of in-world time invested often matters more than the credits. While spending additional credits greatly increases the efficiency of Crafting an item, you can't build a shopping mall in a day just because you have enough money to pay for the whole process. Downtime is a good opportunity for characters to start long processes that can continue in the background as the PCs adventure, provided they can find a trustworthy, competent person to run things in their stead.

SHOPPING AND TECHNOLOGY

Due to the general level of technology and the ease of buying and selling goods on an infosphere, you can shop without taking valuable time that could've been spent on other downtime activities. You're still free to spend your downtime bargain hunting or selling merchandise using Computers, Deception, Diplomacy, Society, or a relevant Lore Skill to reduce the price of goods purchased or increase the sale price of items sold using the Income Earned table (*Player* Core 187), based on your proficiency rank in the skill. You can't use the Shopping activity to sell an item for more than 100% of its market value or reduce an item's price to below 50% of its market value.

MONEY DURING LONG PERIODS OF DOWNTIME

If the PCs have a very long time between adventures, especially years, they have the opportunity to collect a great deal of credits through downtime. Use the guidelines for average progress (page 47) and the Cost of Living table (page 50) to figure out how much they get. Because you're trying to convey that a long time has passed, have them spend it before you jump to the end of downtime. What did they invest in during those years? What drew their interest? Did their fortunes rise or fall? Did they acquire interesting objects or hire compelling people? Consider this expenditure another way to show how the PCs impact the universe.

COST OF LIVING

Tracking cost of living is usually best reserved for months or years of downtime since that's when someone might earn a substantial amount of money from downtime activities and find that costs really add up. You can usually ignore it if there are only a few days of downtime, though if a PC is roleplaying a fine or extravagant lifestyle, you might charge them during even short periods of downtime to reinforce the story they're telling. For short periods of downtime, characters are usually just passing through a settlement or spending a bit of time there. You can use the weekly cost of living listed in the Cost of Living table on page 50 and divide by 7 to determine the combined prices of hotel rooms and meals per day. Deduct these costs from a character's funds after they gain any credits from their other downtime activities.

A character can live off the land instead, but each day they do, they typically use the Subsist activity (*Player Core* 191) to the exclusion of any other downtime activity.

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COST OF LIVING

Standard of Living	Week	Month	Year
Subsistence	no cost	no cost	no cost
Comfortable	10 credits	40 credits	400 credits
Fine	300 credits	1,300 credits	16,000 credits
Extravagant	1,000 credits	4,300 credits	52,000 credits

LONG-TERM REST

Each full 24-hour period a character spends resting during downtime allows them to recover double what they would for an 8-hour rest. They must spend this time resting in a comfortable and secure location, typically in bed.

If they spend significantly longer in bed rest–usually from a few days to a week of downtime–they recover from all damage and most nonpermanent conditions. Characters affected by diseases, long-lasting poisons, or similar afflictions might need to continue attempting saves during downtime. Some curses, permanent injuries, and other situations that require magic or special care to remove don't end automatically during long-term rest.

RETRAINING

The retraining rules on page 433 of *Player Core* allow a player to change some character choices, but they rely on you, as the GM, to decide whether the retraining requires a teacher, how long it takes, if it has any associated costs, and if the ability can be retrained at all. It's reasonable for a character to retrain most choices, and you should allow them. Only choices that are truly intrinsic to the character, like a mystic's connection, might be off-limits without extraordinary circumstances. Consider what effort each PC puts forth as they retrain, so you can describe how they feel their abilities change. What kind of research and practice do they do? If they have a teacher, what advice does that teacher give?

You can run a campaign without retraining if you want the PCs to be more bound by their decisions or are running a game without downtime. However, if your campaign doesn't use downtime rules but a player really regrets a decision made while building or leveling up their character, you might make an exception for them by letting them simply change the decision.

Some players enjoy making retraining into a story. Use NPCs the character already knows as teachers, have a character undertake intense research at a university, or ground the retraining in the game's narrative by making it the consequence of something that happened to the character in a previous session.

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TIME

Retraining a feat or skill increase typically takes a week. Class features that require a choice can also be retrained but take longer: at least a month, possibly more. Retraining might take even longer if it would be especially physically demanding or require travel, lengthy experimentation, or in-depth research, but usually, you won't want to require more than a month for a feat or skill, or 4 months for a class feature.

A character might need to retrain several options at once. For instance, retraining a skill increase might mean they have skill feats they can no longer use, and so they'll need to retrain those as well. You can add all this retraining time together, then reduce the total a bit to represent the cohesive nature of the retraining.

INSTRUCTION AND COSTS

The rules abstract the process of learning new things as you level up—you're learning on the job—but retraining suggests that the character works with an instructor or undertakes special research. If you want, you can entirely ignore this aspect of retraining, but it does give an opportunity to introduce (or reintroduce) NPCs and further the game's story. You can even have one player character mentor another, particularly when it comes to retraining skills.

You don't have to use teachers, but it gives you a great way to introduce a new NPC or bring back an existing one in a new role. The role of a teacher could also be filled by communing with the cosmos for a solarian, training with the military for the soldier, and so on. The important part is the guidance gained from that source.

Any costs to retraining by using an NPC should be pretty minor—about as much as a PC could gain by Earning Income over the same period of time. The costs are mostly there to make the training feel appropriate within the context of the story, not to consume significant amounts of the character's earnings. A teacher might volunteer to work without pay as a reward for something the character has already done or simply ask for a favor in return.

EXTREME RETRAINING

By the default rules, PCs can't retrain their class, ancestry, background, attribute modifiers, or anything else intrinsic to their character. However, you might be able to find a way to make this happen in the story, going beyond the realm of retraining and into deeper, narrative quests. Class and attribute modifiers are the simplest of these changes to justify, as they could come about solely through intense retraining. Especially at low levels, you might let a player rebuild their character as a different class, perhaps starting by retraining into a multiclass dedication for their new class and swapping into more feats from that dedication as partial progress toward the class change. Just be mindful that they aren't swapping over to switch out a class they think is great at low levels for one they think is stronger at high levels, or constantly swapping classes to chase a new play style. Retraining a class or ability modifiers should take a long time, typically months or years.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Improvements in automation, communication, and other technologies have dramatically changed living standards for most Pact Worlds citizens since what the people of Lost Golarion called the Age of Lost Omens. Technology and magic are integrated into the fabric of everyday life within most cities, and alien arcologies flourish on distant planets. Characters on a long journey aboard a starship might escape the monotony through entertainment binges or rigorous training, while characters visiting a settlement might explore the local culture, try new delicacies, and seek out nightlife hot spots.

There are plenty of new ways to spend downtime in Starfinder. You might browse an infosphere, likely researching information, chatting with other users, or shopping. You might enjoy media by watching reruns aboard your ship, attending a live show at a port of call, or playing games on a console. Though there are options for making money or adjusting your character, it's often better to seek out fun and interesting activities that can open up new opportunities for character building, adventures, or relationships.

Changing an ancestry or heritage requires biohacking or magic, such as reincarnation into a new form. This might take a complex ritual, exposure to experimental biotechnology, or the intervention of a deity. For instance, you might require an ysoki who wants to be a shirren to first become trained in Shirren Lore, worship Hylax, and eventually do a great service for a shirren colony to get a divine blessing of transformation.

Retraining a background requires altering the game's story so that the events the PC thought happened didn't. That can be pretty tricky to justify! One easy scenario is that they had their memory altered or replaced with memories from another timeline and need to get it restored to reveal their "true" background—the new retrained background. They might also be revealed as a clone or parallel self from another reality.

Of course, in all these cases you could make an exception and just let the player make the change without explanation. This effectively acknowledges that you're playing a game and don't need an in-world justification to make certain retroactive changes. Or the justification could be something the player is unaware of until later, potentially tying the retraining into the larger ongoing themes of the campaign. It might be easier, or require less suspension of disbelief, to ask the group to adjust their ideas of what previously happened in the game—retconning events—than to create an in-world justification for something like an ysoki turning into a shirren via magic or a technomancer becoming a witchwarper via reality hopping.

DIFFICULTY CLASSES

As the Game Master, it's up to you to set the difficulty classes (DCs) for checks that don't use a predefined DC. The following sections offer advice on how to set appropriate DCs and tweak them as needed to feel natural for your story. Picking a simple DC and using a level-based DC each work well in certain circumstances, and you can adjust both types of DC using the advice on adjusting difficulty.



SIMPLE DCS

Sometimes you need to quickly set a difficulty class. The easiest method is to select a simple DC from the Simple DCs table on page 53 by estimating which proficiency rank best matches the task (that rank is usually not required to succeed at the task). If it's something pretty much anyone would have a decent chance at, use the untrained DC. If it would require a degree of training, use the DC listed for trained, expert, master, or legendary proficiency, as appropriate to the complexity of the task. For example, say a PC was trying to uncover the facts behind an infosphere rumor. You determine this requires a check to Recall Knowledge, and that only someone with master proficiency in Infosphere Lore would know the information, so you'd set the DC at 30—the simple master DC.

Simple DCs work well when you need a DC on the fly and there's no level associated with the task. They're most useful for skill checks. Because there isn't much gradation between the simple DCs, they don't work as well for hazards or combats where the PCs' lives are on the line; you're better off using level-based DCs for such challenges.

LEVEL-BASED DCS

When you're determining a skill DC based on something that has a level, use the table on page 53 to set the DC. Find the level of the subject, and assign the corresponding DC. Since spells use a 1–10 scale, use the Spell Rank column for them.

Use these DCs when a PC needs to Identify a Spell or Recall Knowledge about a creature, attempts to Earn Income by performing a task of a certain level, and so on. You can also use the level-based DCs for obstacles instead of assigning a simple DC. For example, you might determine that the walls of a space station were constructed of smooth metal and are hard to climb. You could simply say only someone with master proficiency could climb them and use the simple DC of 30. Or you might decide that the 15th-level mechanic villain who built the station crafted the wall and use the 15th-level DC of 34. Either approach is reasonable!

Note that PCs who invest in a skill become more likely to succeed at a DC of their level as they increase in level, and the listed DCs eventually pose very little challenge for them.

ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

You might decide a DC should differ from the baseline, whether to account for PCs' areas of expertise or to represent the rarity of spells or items. A DC adjustment represents an essential difference in the difficulty of a task and applies to anyone attempting a specific check for it. Adjustments happen most often with tasks whose DCs are based on their level. You'll often apply the adjustments for uncommon, rare, or unique subjects.

The DC Adjustments table lists the categories of adjustments. The adjustments' names are relative to the base difficulty of the task itself—a very hard 2nd-level task will not be "very hard" for a 10th-level PC to accomplish! PCs who invest in a skill will become better and better at that skill as they increase in level. For example, even the best 1st-level PC has grim odds against an incredibly hard 1st-level DC, with a huge chance of critical failure, but by 20th level, an optimized character with a modicum of magic or assistance can take down incredibly hard 20th-level DCs over half the time, critically failing only on a 1. At higher levels, many groups will find that the very hard DC is more like standard for them; keep that in mind if you need a check that presents a true challenge to a high-level group.

You might use different DCs for a task based on the particular skill or statistic used for the check. Let's say your PCs encounter a magical tome about dragons. The tome is 4th-level and has the arcane trait, so you set the DC of an Arcana check to Identify the Magic to 19. As noted in Identify Magic, other magic-related skills can typically be used at a higher DC, so you might decide the check is very hard for a character using Occultism instead and set the DC at 24 for characters using that skill. If a character in your group had Physical Science Lore, you might determine that it would be easy or very easy for them to use that skill and adjust the DC to 17 or 14. These adjustments aren't taking the place of characters' bonuses, modifiers, and penalties—they are due to the applicability of the skills being used.

GROUP ATTEMPTS

The DCs in this chapter give an individual character a strong and increasing chance of success if they have some proficiency. On occasion, though, you'll have a task that only one person in the group needs to succeed at, but that everyone can attempt. The number of dice being rolled means that there's a very high

chance at least one of them will succeed. Most of the time, that's perfectly fine, but sometimes you'll want the task to be a challenge, with some uncertainty as to whether the party can succeed. In these cases, make the check very hard or incredibly hard if you want it to be particularly difficult or at high levels. At these DCs, most of the party will probably fail, but someone might still succeed, likely a character who has heavily invested in the given skill, as is expected for specialized characters.

SIMPLE DCS

Rank	DC
Untrained	10
Trained	15
Expert	20
Master	30
Legendary	40

DCS BY LEVEL

Level	DC	Level	DC
0	14	13	31
1	15	14	32
2	16	15	34
3	18	16	35
4	19	17	36
5	20	18	38
6	22	19	39
7	23	20	40
8	24	21	42
9	26	22	44
10	27	23	46
11	28	24	48
12	30	25	50

Spell Rank*	DC
1st	15
2nd	18
3rd	20
4th	23
5th	26
6th	28
7th	31
8th	34
9th	36
10th	39

* If a spell is uncommon or rare, adjust its difficulty accordingly.

DC ADJUSTMENTS

Difficulty	Adjustment	Rarity
Incredibly easy	–10	–
Very easy	–5	–
Easy	–2	–
Hard	+2	Uncommon
Very hard	+5	Rare
Incredibly hard	+10	Unique

MINIMUM PROFICIENCY

Sometimes succeeding at a particular task requires a character to have a specific proficiency rank in addition to a success at the check. Locks and traps often require a certain proficiency rank to successfully use the Pick a Lock or Disable a Device actions of Thievery. A character whose proficiency rank is lower than what's listed can attempt the check, but they can't succeed. You can apply similar minimum proficiencies to other tasks. You might decide, for example, that an electronic trap that uses a console requires training in Computers to understand. An untrained soldier can't succeed at the check, but she can attempt it if she wants!

For checks that require a minimum proficiency, keep the following guidelines in mind. A 2nd-level or lower task should almost never require expert proficiency, a 6th-level or lower task should almost never require master proficiency, and a 14th-level or lower task should almost never require legendary proficiency. If they did, no character of the appropriate level could succeed.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

You as the GM set the DCs for certain checks or determine other parameters. Here are guidelines for the most common tasks. Remember that all of these are guidelines, and you can adjust them as necessary to suit the situation.

CRAFT

When a character Crafts an item, use the item's level to determine the DC, applying the adjustments for the item's rarity if it's not common. You might also apply the easy DC adjustment for an item the crafter has made before. Repairing an item usually uses the DC of the item's level with no adjustments, though you might adjust the DC to be more difficult for an item of a higher level than the character can Craft.

EARN INCOME

You set the task level when someone tries to Earn Income. The highest-level task available is usually the same as the level of the settlement where the character is located. If you don't know the settlement's level, it's usually 0–1 for a village or remote colony, 2–4 for a town or starship, or 5–7 for a city or space station. A PC might need to travel to a megacity or capital to find tasks of levels 8-10, and to the largest ports of call in the galaxy or another plane to routinely find tasks beyond that. Some tasks can be done on the infosphere, but characters might not receive the benefits until they return to a port of call. Some locations might have higher-level tasks available based on the nature of the settlement. A major port of call might have higher-level tasks for Piloting, a city

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DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF LORE

Lore skills are one of the most specialized aspects of Starfinder, but they require GM oversight, particularly in determining which Lore subcategories are acceptable for player characters to select. A Lore subcategory represents a narrow focus, and thus it shouldn't replace all or even most of an entire skill, nor should it convey vast swaths of information. For example, a single Lore subcategory doesn't cover every deity's favored weapon—that's covered by the Religion skill—but a character could have a Lore subcategory that covers the traditions of a single deity, like Newborn Lore. One Lore subcategory won't cover every item or even an entire category of item (like consumables), but it could cover a narrow focus, like using Life Science lore to learn about pharmaceuticals and biotech augmentations. A more narrow skill, like Pharmaceutical Lore, might further lower the DC. A single Lore subcategory couldn't cover the entire multiverse, but it could cover a whole plane (other than the Universe).

with a vibrant arts scene might have higher-level tasks for Performance, and so on. The Earn Income Tasks table on page 53 includes some ideas for suitable tasks. If someone is trying to use a particularly obscure skill, they might have trouble finding tasks of an ideal level, or any at all—no one in most settlements is clamoring for the expertise of someone with Squox Lore.

Once the PC has decided on a particular level of task from those available, use the DC for that level. You might adjust the DC to be more difficult if there's network maintenance during a job over the infosphere, a rowdy audience for a performance, or the like.

GATHER INFORMATION

To set the DC to Gather Information, use a simple DC representing the availability of information about the subject. Adjust the DC upward if the PC Gathering Information seeks in-depth information. For example, if a character wants to Gather Information about a secret laboratory, you might decide that a common person wouldn't know much about it, but any scientist or corporate worker would, so learning basic facts uses the simple DC for trained proficiency. The location of the building is superficial, so discovering it might be DC 15 (the simple trained DC). Learning the identity of the laboratory's owner, however, might be DC 20 if the corporation is more obscure.

IDENTIFY MAGIC OR LEARN A SPELL

The DC to Identify Magic or Learn a Spell is usually the DC listed for the spell's rank or the item's level, adjusted for its rarity. A very strange item or phenomenon usually uses a higher DC adjustment. For a cursed item or certain illusory items, you can use an incredibly hard DC to increase the chance of misidentification. If someone has already identified the spell or item, it's best to either let them automatically identify it or apply an easy or very easy adjustment.

RECALL KNOWLEDGE

On most topics, you can use simple DCs for checks to Recall Knowledge. For a check about a specific creature, trap, or other subject with a level, use a level-based DC (adjusting for rarity as needed). You might adjust the difficulty down, maybe even drastically, if the subject is especially notorious or famed. Knowing simple tales about an infamous dragon's exploits, for example, might be incredibly easy for the dragon's level, or even just a simple trained DC.

Alternative Skills

As noted in the action's description, a character might attempt to Recall Knowledge using a different skill than the ones listed as the default options. If the skill is highly applicable, like using Medicine to identify a pharmaceutical, you probably don't need to adjust the DC. If its relevance is a stretch, adjust the DC upward as described in Adjusting Difficulty.

Additional Knowledge

Sometimes a character might want to follow up on a check to Recall Knowledge, rolling another check to discover more information. After a success, further uses of Recall Knowledge can yield more information, but you should adjust the difficulty to be higher for each attempt. Once a character has attempted an incredibly hard check or failed a check, further attempts are fruitless—the character has recalled everything they know about the subject.

Creature Identification

A character who successfully identifies a creature learns one of its best-known attributes—such as a ferrofluid ooze's magnetism (and the fact that it can be demagnetized by fire) or an oma's electrical discharge. On a critical success, the character also learns something subtler, like a weakness that's not obvious or the trigger for one of the creature's reactions.

The skill used to identify a creature usually depends on that creature's trait, as shown on the Creature Identification Skills table, but you have leeway on which skills apply. For instance, midwives are aberrations but have a strong connection to divine spells and serve a deity, so you might allow a character to use Religion to identify them without any DC adjustment and make using Occultism harder. Lore skills can also be used to identify a specific creature. Using the applicable Lore usually has an easy or very easy DC (before adjusting for rarity).

CREATURE IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

Creature Trait	Skills
Aberration	Occultism
Animal	Nature

Creature Trait	Skills
Astral	Occultism
Beast	Arcana, Nature
Celestial	Religion
Construct	Arcana, Crafting
Dragon	Arcana
Dream	Occultism
Elemental	Arcana, Nature
Ethereal	Occultism
Fey	Nature
Fiend	Religion
Fungus	Nature
Humanoid	Society
Monitor	Religion
Ooze	Occultism
Plant	Nature
Robot	Computers, Crafting
Shade	Religion
Spirit	Occultism
Time	Occultism
Undead	Religion

NAVIGATE AND SENSE DIRECTION

Pick the most appropriate simple DC when someone uses Piloting to Navigate or Survival to Sense Direction. This is usually the trained DC in normal wilderness, expert in deep forests or underground, master in featureless or tricky locations, or legendary in weird or surreal environments on other planes.

SOCIAL SKILLS

When a character uses Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance to influence or impress someone whose level or Will DC you don't know, estimate the level of the creature and use that DC. A regular citizen is usually level 0 or 1. Don't worry about being exact. It often makes sense to adjust the DC based on the target's attitude for Deception, Diplomacy, or Performance, making the DC easy for a friendly creature, very easy for a helpful one, hard for an unfriendly one, or very hard for a hostile one. You might adjust the DC further or differently based on the PC's goal; for instance, the DC to Request something an indifferent NPC is fundamentally opposed to might be incredibly hard or impossible, and it might be easy to convince an unfriendly creature to do something it already wants to do.

SUBSIST

A simple DC is usually sufficient for the Subsist action, with a trained DC for a typical situation. Use the disposition of the environment or settlement as a guide; an environment with scarce resources or a city with little tolerance for transience might require an expert or higher DC.

TRACK

Often when a PC uses Survival to Track, you can pick a simple DC and adjust it based on the circumstances. For example, an army is usually easy to track, so you could use the untrained DC of 10. If the army drove tanks through mud, you could even adjust this down to DC 5. On the other hand, if the party pursues a cunning spy using Cover Tracks, you might use their Survival DC as the DC to Track. If the character is familiar with the terrain, you might want to apply an easy adjustment.

TRAIN AN ANIMAL

Train Animal allows PCs to teach animals tricks. Use the level of the animal as the baseline; you can adjust the DC up if the trick is especially difficult or down if the animal is especially domesticated, like a squox.

RECALL KNOWLEDGE CONSIDERATIONS

Use the following advice.

"What is it?": For the basic information referred to in Recall Knowledge, you'll typically want to answer with a sentence that includes a name, type or category, and some basic context. You have lots of freedom, and players will rarely complain about getting too much detail. *Examples:* "This statue represents Zon-Shelyn, the Embrace, god of creating art from suffering, strange beauty, and reunion with loved ones." "The merchant is a witchwyrd, a four-armed humanoid who often loves to haggle." "The comm unit was manufactured on Eox, a planet populated by undead." "This creature is a wabu, a popular fluffy pet from Daimalko." Often, the answer you need is summarized in a sentence within the subject's description or stat block!

Redirection: You can freely make suggestions to a player if they seem stumped on what to ask or think of a question unlikely to be relevant. If they have a question they really want to ask, find a way to make the answer interesting even if you don't think the knowledge will be useful.

Adventure Details: Published adventures often include a piece of information characters can discover if they Recall Knowledge. A player doesn't need to ask the perfect question in order to get this knowledge! Feel free to feed it to them on any check to Recall Knowledge that hits the DC, often in addition to an answer to their original question.

General vs. Unique: Some elements, such as creatures or items, might require you to draw a distinction between a general concept and a unique individual, such as "performer" vs. "Zo!" When a PC tries to Recall Knowledge, let them choose whether to ask about the general category or the unique person or item, and determine the DC and specifics based on that choice. If the unique character or item is famous enough, the DC might even be easier than for the general topic!

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REWARDS

In Starfinder, player characters can receive three kinds of rewards for their heroic deeds: Experience Points, which they'll use to level up; treasure, which can be anything from powerful items to more intangible benefits; and Hero Points, which they can use to get out of sticky situations.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

As characters adventure, they earn Experience Points (XP). These awards come from achieving goals, completing social encounters, exploring new places, fighting monsters, overcoming hazards, and other deeds. You have a great deal of control over when the characters gain XP, though the following guidelines are what you're expected to give out in a standard campaign.

Normally, when a player character reaches 1,000 XP or more, they level up, reduce their XP by 1,000, and start progressing toward the next level, though you can choose to advance your players more quickly or slowly if it suits your group. These other means of advancement are noted in the Advancement Speeds sidebar on page 57.

XP AWARDS

Experience Points are awarded for encounters, exploration, and progress in an adventure. When the PCs face direct opposition, such as a fight or a social conflict, the XP earned is based on the level of the challenge the party overcame. Characters can also gain XP from exploration, such as finding secret areas, locating a hideout, enduring a dangerous environment, or mapping an entire dungeon.

The party is a team, so any XP awarded goes to all members of the group. For instance, if the party wins a battle worth 100 XP, they each get 100 XP, even if the party's operative was off hacking a server during the battle. But if the operative collected valuable blueprints they could sell to a rival megacorp, which you've decided was a moderate accomplishment worth 30 XP, each member of the party gets 30 XP, too.

Adversaries and Hazards

Encounters with adversaries and hazards grant a set amount of XP. When the group overcomes an encounter with creatures or hazards, each character gains XP equal to the total XP of the creatures and hazards in the encounter (this excludes XP adjustments for different party sizes; see Party Size for details).

Trivial encounters don't normally grant any XP, but you might decide to award the same XP as for a minor or moderate accomplishment for a trivial encounter that was important to the story, or for an encounter that became trivial because of the order in which the PCs encountered it in a nonlinear adventure.

Accomplishments

Characters' actions that move the story forward—like securing a major alliance, establishing an organization, or causing an NPC to have a change of heart—are considered accomplishments and should be rewarded with XP. Their significance determines the size of the XP award. Determine whether the achievement was a minor, moderate, or major accomplishment, and refer to the XP Awards table below to award an appropriate amount of XP.

Minor accomplishments include all sorts of significant, memorable, or surprising moments in the game. A moderate accomplishment typically represents a goal that takes most of a session to complete, and a major accomplishment is usually the culmination of the characters' efforts across many sessions. Moderate and major accomplishments usually come after heroic effort, so that's an ideal time to also give a Hero Point to one or more of the characters involved.

As mentioned earlier, it's up to you how much XP to give out for accomplishments. As a general guideline, in a given game session, you'll typically give several minor awards, one or two moderate awards, and only one major award, if any. Try to be consistent about what is worth accomplishment XP and what isn't, and give out at least some accomplishment XP every session.

If two PCs pull off the same magnitude of task, they should get an equal amount of accomplishment XP. That doesn't mean you should allow XP "farming," however. Part of the assumption of accomplishment XP is that the accomplishment is novel and the result of something challenging. If someone got accomplishment XP for snatching a dragon's egg from a lair, someone collecting another egg wouldn't necessarily get accomplishment XP.

XP AWARDS

Accomplishment	XP Award
Minor	10 XP
Moderate*	30 XP
Major*	80 XP

* Typically earns a Hero Point as well.

Adversary Level	XP Award
Party level – 4	10 XP
Party level – 3	15 XP
Party level – 2	20 XP
Party level – 1	30 XP
Party level	40 XP
Party level + 1	60 XP
Party level + 2	80 XP
Party level + 3	120 XP
Party level + 4	160 XP

Hazard Level	Simple Hazard	Complex Hazard
Party level – 4	2 XP	10 XP
Party level – 3	3 XP	15 XP
Party level – 2	4 XP	20 XP
Party level – 1	6 XP	30 XP
Party level	8 XP	40 XP
Party level + 1	12 XP	60 XP
Party level + 2	16 XP	80 XP
Party level + 3	24 XP	120 XP
Party level + 4	32 XP	160 XP

PARTY SIZE

The rules for advancement assume a group of four PCs. The rules for building encounters (page 75) describe how to accommodate groups of a different size, but the XP awards don't change—always award the amount of XP listed for a group of four characters. You usually won't need to make many adjustments for a differently sized group outside of encounters. Be careful of providing too many ways to get accomplishment XP when you have a large group, though. Since they can pursue multiple accomplishments at once, it can lead to the PCs leveling up too fast.

GROUP PARITY AND PARTY LEVEL

It's recommended that you keep all the player characters at the same XP total. This makes it much easier to know what challenges are suitable for your players. Having characters at different levels can mean weaker characters die more easily and their players feel less effective, which in turn makes the game less fun for those players.

If you choose not to keep the whole group at the same character level, you'll need to select a party level to determine your XP budget for encounters. Choose the level you think best represents the party's ability as a whole. Use the highest level if only one or two characters are behind, or an average if everyone is at a different level. If only one character is two or more levels ahead, use a party level suitable for the lower-level characters, and adjust the encounters as if there were one additional PC for every 2 levels the higher-level character has beyond the rest of the party.

Party members who are behind the party level gain double the XP other characters do until they reach the party's level. When tracking individually, you'll need to decide whether party members get XP for missed sessions.

HERO POINTS

Unlike Experience Points and treasure, which stay with a character, Hero Points are granted and used on a per-session basis. At the start of a game session, you give out 1 Hero Point to each player character. You can also give out more Hero Points during the game, typically after a heroic moment or accomplishment (see below). As noted in *Player Core*, a player can spend 1 Hero Point for a reroll, or they can spend all their Hero Points to recover when near death.

In a typical game, you'll hand out about 1 Hero Point during each hour of play after the first (for example, 3 extra points in a 4-hour session). If you want a more over-the-top game, or if your group is up against incredible odds and showing immense bravery, you might give them out at a faster rate, like 1 every 30 minutes (6 over a 4-hour session). You might also give them out at a faster rate during a shorter session. Try to ensure each PC has opportunities to earn Hero Points, and avoid granting all of the Hero Points to a single character.

Brave last stands, protecting innocents, and using a smart strategy or spell to save the day could all earn a character a Hero Point. Look for those moments when everybody at the table celebrates or sits back in awe of a character's accomplishments; that's your cue to issue that character a Hero Point.

You can also give out a Hero Point for a less impactful, but still notable moments. A PC landing the killing blow on a difficult foe or successfully navigating a social challenge could earn a Hero Point. There are times when the PCs' actions aren't exceptionally dramatic or world-shattering, but that shouldn't prevent you from handing out a Hero Point as a reward.

The party could also gain Hero Points for their accomplishments throughout the game. For a moderate or major accomplishment, consider giving out a Hero Point as well. This point typically goes to a PC who was instrumental in attaining that accomplishment.

ADVANCEMENT SPEEDS

By varying the amount of XP it takes to gain a level, you can change how quickly characters gain power. The game rules assume a group playing with standard advancement. Fast advancement works best when you know you won't be playing a very long campaign and want to accomplish as much as possible quickly; slow advancement works best for a gritty campaign where all progress is hard-won.

You can alter XP from one adventure to the next to get a different feel. During a street-level murder mystery and travel through a haunted skyscraper, you might use slow advancement. When the PCs reach the dungeon, you might switch to standard or fast advancement. The values below are just examples. You can use values even higher or lower.

Advancement Speed	XP to Level Up
Fast	800 XP
Standard	1,000 XP
Slow	1,200 XP

Story-Based Leveling

If you don't want to deal with managing and handing out XP, or if you want to have progression based solely on events in the story, you can ignore the XP process entirely and instead simply have the characters level up at story-appropriate moments. Generally, the characters should gain a level every three to four game sessions, just after the most appropriate big event that happens during that time, such as defeating a significant villain or achieving a major goal.



TREASURE

As the GM, it's your job to distribute treasure to the player characters. Treasure appears throughout an adventure, and the PCs obtain it by raiding treasure hoards, defeating foes who carry valuable items or currency, getting paid for successful quests, and any other way you can imagine.

The game's math is based on PCs looking to find, buy, or craft items that are the same level as them—this includes improved weapons and armor, weapon and armor upgrades, augmentations, magical items, tech items, consumable items, and items that help with the PCs' favorite skills or tactics. A PC who gets the item at that level will typically be ahead of the monsters, hazards, and skill DCs briefly, before their challenges start to catch back up. The guidelines for awarding treasure, meanwhile, have you give the party items 1 level higher than the PCs. This means the items found on adventures are more powerful than those a PC could make (which are capped at the PC's level).

The treasure assignment is measured across a level instead of per encounter because some encounters won't have treasure, some will have extra treasure, and some treasure hoards or rewards might be found outside encounters entirely. You always have the freedom to assign extra treasure for a high-powered game, less treasure for a gritty survival horror adventure, or any amount in between.

As you choose treasure, look at the flow of treasure in the campaign, and see which PCs are ahead and which are behind. It's usually best to mix "core items," treasure linked to a PC's main abilities, with treasure that has unusual, less broadly applicable powers. For instance, the party's envoy might not go out of their way to purchase a *diva's microphone*, but they'll likely use it if they find it. These items should always be useful—a party without a close-quarters martial character won't have much use for *hardlight handwraps*. The number of core items to give out depends on you, but make sure the characters have plenty of core options. Consider opening up other options for parties traveling to other parts of the galaxy or visiting other planes.

TREASURE BY LEVEL

The Party Treasure by Level table shows how much treasure you should give out over the course of a level for a group of four PCs. The Total Value column gives an approximate total value of all the treasure, in case you want to spend it like a budget. The next several columns provide suggestions for breaking down that total into permanent items, which the PCs keep and use for a long time; consumables, which are destroyed after being used once; and currency, which includes credits, UPBs, and other valuables.

The final column gives the amount of currency to add for each PC beyond four in the group. (Different Party Sizes on page 60 provides more guidance on this.)

For instance, between the time the PCs reach 3rd level and the time they reach 4th level, you should give them the treasure listed in the table for 3rd level, worth approximately

PARTY TREASURE BY LEVEL

Level	Total Value	Permanent Items (By Item Level)	Consumables (By Item Level)	Party Currency	Currency per Additional PC
1	1,750 credits	**2nd:** 2, **1st:** 2	**2nd:** 2, **1st:** 3	400 credits	100 credits
2	3,000 credits	**3rd:** 2, **2nd:** 2	**3rd:** 2, **2nd:** 2, **1st:** 2	700 credits	180 credits
3	5,000 credits	**4th:** 2, **3rd:** 2	**4th:** 2, **3rd:** 2, **2nd:** 2	1,200 credits	300 credits
4	8,500 credits	**5th:** 2, **4th:** 2	**5th:** 2, **4th:** 2, **3rd:** 2	2,000 credits	500 credits
5	13,500 credits	**6th:** 2, **5th:** 2	**6th:** 2, **5th:** 2, **4th:** 2	3,200 credits	800 credits
6	20,000 credits	**7th:** 2, **6th:** 2	**7th:** 2, **6th:** 2, **5th:** 2	5,000 credits	1,250 credits
7	29,000 credits	**8th:** 2, **7th:** 2	**8th:** 2, **7th:** 2, **6th:** 2	7,200 credits	1,800 credits
8	40,000 credits	**9th:** 2, **8th:** 2	**9th:** 2, **8th:** 2, **7th:** 2	10,000 credits	2,500 credits
9	57,000 credits	**10th:** 2, **9th:** 2	**10th:** 2, **9th:** 2, **8th:** 2	14,000 credits	3,500 credits
10	80,000 credits	**11th:** 2, **10th:** 2	**11th:** 2, **10th:** 2, **9th:** 2	20,000 credits	5,000 credits
11	115,000 credits	**12th:** 2, **11th:** 2	**12th:** 2, **11th:** 2, **10th:** 2	28,000 credits	7,000 credits
12	165,000 credits	**13th:** 2, **12th:** 2	**13th:** 2, **12th:** 2, **11th:** 2	40,000 credits	10,000 credits
13	250,000 credits	**14th:** 2, **13th:** 2	**14th:** 2, **13th:** 2, **12th:** 2	60,000 credits	15,000 credits
14	365,000 credits	**15th:** 2, **14th:** 2	**15th:** 2, **14th:** 2, **13th:** 2	90,000 credits	22,500 credits
15	545,000 credits	**16th:** 2, **15th:** 2	**16th:** 2, **15th:** 2, **14th:** 2	130,000 credits	32,500 credits
16	825,000 credits	**17th:** 2, **16th:** 2	**17th:** 2, **16th:** 2, **15th:** 2	200,000 credits	50,000 credits
17	1,280,000 credits	**18th:** 2, **17th:** 2	**18th:** 2, **17th:** 2, **16th:** 2	300,000 credits	75,000 credits
18	2,080,000 credits	**19th:** 2, **18th:** 2	**19th:** 2, **18th:** 2, **17th:** 2	480,000 credits	120,000 credits
19	3,550,000 credits	**20th:** 2, **19th:** 2	**20th:** 2, **19th:** 2, **18th:** 2	800,000 credits	200,000 credits
20	4,900,000 credits	**20th:** 4	**20th:** 4, **19th:** 2	1,400,000 credits	350,000 credits

5,000 credits: two 4th-level permanent items, two 3rd-level permanent items, two 4th-level consumables, two 3rd-level consumables, two 2nd-level consumables, and 1,200 credits worth of currency.

When assigning 1st-level permanent items, your best options are armor, weapons, and other gear from *Player Core* worth between 100 and 200 credits. The treasure listed in the row for 20th level represents a full level's worth of adventures, even though there is no way to reach 21st level.

Some creature entries in *Alien Core* list treasure that can be gained by defeating an individual creature; this counts toward the treasure for any given level.

Published adventures include a suitable amount of treasure, though you should still monitor the party's capabilities as the PCs progress through the adventure to make sure they don't end up behind. You might also consider making changes to the treasure found in a published adventure to better fit the needs of the party, such as changing a tactical rotolaser into a tactical assassin rifle if none of the PCs use area or automatic weapons.

Currency

A party will find money and other treasure that isn't useful on its own but that can be sold or spent on other things. The credit values in the Party Currency column don't refer only to credits found on credsticks. Gems, collectibles, crafting materials (including precious materials), jewelry, and even items of much lower level than the party's level can all be more interesting than a fully loaded credstick.

If you include a lower-level permanent item as part of a currency reward, count only half the item's Price toward the credit amount, assuming the party will sell the item or use it as crafting material. But lower-level consumables might still be useful, particularly *spell gems*, and if you think your party will use them, count those items at their full Price.

Other Types of Treasure

Not all treasure has to be items or currency. Crafters can use the Crafting skill to turn raw materials directly into items instead of buying those items with credits. Knowledge can expand a character's abilities, and formulas make good treasure for item-crafting characters. A prepared spellcaster might get access to new spells from an enemy's computer, while an operative or soldier might learn new fighting techniques.

Starships, vehicles, and other large assets can't be looted as easily as most other forms of treasure. While using these rewards to give the PCs a base of operations can help progress the story, estimating their wealth and allowing PCs to sell them to buy personal treasure can unbalance a game. Thus, starships, buildings, businesses, and other such assets don't cost the PCs credits to purchase and can't be sold for credits—they're a narrative device meant to help you tell a story. Instead, consider allowing PCs to "trade up" these assets into other assets they're interested in or "trade off" these assets for other benefits, such as introductions to important people, access to previously off-limit locations, favors, street cred, fame, notoriety—in short, power or access.

For some groups, this will feel unrealistic, and you'll want to find another solution. While you could adjust the treasure in future encounters to compensate, it's easier and much safer to make the property impossible to sell, either due to legal complications (like licensing laws), due to the poor shape of the property after the battle, or due to the property's iconic

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ADJUSTING TREASURE

The treasure you award to the party should be monitored and adjusted as you play. You might need to give out treasure you hadn't originally planned for, especially if the group bypasses part of an adventure. Keep an eye on the party's resources. If they're running out of consumables or money, or if they're having trouble in combat because their items aren't up to the task, you can make adjustments.

This is especially common in adventures that have little downtime or that take place far from civilization. If the group goes a long time without being able to purchase or Craft useful items, the PCs will be flush with credits and valuables but behind on useful equipment. In a situation like this, you can either place more useful treasure in the adventure or introduce NPCs who are willing to trade.

Megadungeons and Sandboxes

Some adventures have an expectation that the player characters explore where they want and find only what their skill, luck, and ingenuity afford. Two common examples of this type of adventure are the sprawling dungeon with multiple different sections and paths, often called a megadungeon, and free-form exploration, often called a sandbox. If you want to build a free-form adventure like this where characters are likely to miss at least some of the treasure, increase the amount of treasure you place. Be aware, however, that a meticulous group can end up with more treasure than normal and will have advantages in later adventures.

For a simple guideline to these situations, increase the treasure as though there were one more PC in the party. If the structure is especially loose, especially in sandbox adventures, you can increase this amount even further.

status—everyone knows who it belongs to, and that person certainly isn't your players! These complications could just lower the value of the property such that it becomes an appropriate amount of treasure. This approach can make selling these assets feel like off-loading a financially draining property or tricky to sell.

If the PCs acquire an asset that could conceivably make the PCs money, like ownership of a corporation or a hovercab, remind them that such businesses and ventures require investment, upkeep, and attention—often including staff!—and treat these assets like Earning an Income during downtime. Simply ignore the financial minutiae, let the PCs roll to Earn Income (likely as a group, as such assets are usually shared), and incorporate the asset into the narrative during downtime. If you find this boosts the PCs' wealth too high, you can slightly reduce the treasure you give out to compensate. You can use such assets to provide the PCs other tangible benefits that make the effort seem worthwhile, such as access to resources or introductions to allies.

Treasure and Rarity

Giving out uncommon and rare items can get players more interested in treasure. These rewards are especially compelling when the adventurers get the item by defeating or outsmarting an enemy who carries an item that fits their backstory or theme.

Uncommon and rare formulas make great treasure for a character who Crafts items. Note that if an uncommon or rare formula is broadly disseminated, it eventually becomes more common. This can be almost instantaneous if leaked on the infosphere, and it's usually impossible to contain information once it's been released online.

Different Item Levels

The levels listed for items on the Party Treasure by Level table aren't set in stone. You can provide items of slightly higher or lower level as long as you take into account the value of the items you hand out. For instance, suppose you were considering giving a party of 11th-level PCs an elite laser rifle (with a Price of 20,000 credits) as one of their 12th-level items, but you realize they've had trouble finding armor in their recent adventures, so you instead decide to give them a suit of 11th-level superior freebooter armor (14,000 credits) instead. Since the armor has a lower Price than the weapon, you might also add a 9th-level tactical active camouflage armor upgrade (6,500 credits) to make up the difference. The total isn't exactly the same, but that's all right.

However, if you wanted to place a 13th-level permanent item in a treasure hoard, you could remove two 11th-level permanent items to make a roughly equivalent exchange. When you make an exchange upward like this, be cautious: not only might you introduce an item with effects that are disruptive at the party's current level of play, but you also might give an amazing item to one PC while other characters don't gain any new items at all!

If you're playing in a long-term campaign, you can spread out the treasure over time. A major milestone can give extra treasure at one level, followed by a tougher dungeon with fewer new items at the next level.

Check back occasionally to see whether each PC's treasure is comparable to the amount they'd get if they created a new character at their current level, as described under Treasure for New Characters below. They should be a bit higher, but if there's a significant discrepancy, adjust the adventure's upcoming treasure rewards accordingly.

Different Party Sizes

If a party has more than four characters, add the following for each additional character:

- One permanent item of the party's level or 1 level higher
- Two consumables, usually one of the party's level and one of 1 level higher
- Currency equal to the value in the Currency per Additional PC column

If the party has fewer than four characters, you can subtract the same amount for each missing character, but since the game is inherently more challenging with a smaller group that can't cover all roles as efficiently, you might consider subtracting less treasure and allowing the extra gear to help compensate for the smaller group size.

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CHARACTER WEALTH

Level	Permanent Items	Currency	Lump Sum
1	–	150 credits	150 credits
2	**1st:** 1	200 credits	300 credits
3	**2nd:** 1, **1st:** 2	250 credits	750 credits
4	**3rd:** 1, **2nd:** 2, **1st:** 1	300 credits	1,400 credits
5	**4th:** 1, **3rd:** 2, **2nd:** 1, **1st:** 2	500 credits	2,700 credits
6	**5th:** 1, **4th:** 2, **3rd:** 1, **2nd:** 2	800 credits	4,500 credits
7	**6th:** 1, **5th:** 2, **4th:** 1, **3rd:** 2	1,250 credits	7,200 credits
8	**7th:** 1, **6th:** 2, **5th:** 1, **4th:** 2	1,800 credits	11,000 credits
9	**8th:** 1, **7th:** 2, **6th:** 1, **5th:** 2	2,500 credits	16,000 credits
10	**9th:** 1, **8th:** 2, **7th:** 1, **6th:** 2	3,500 credits	23,000 credits
11	**10th:** 1, **9th:** 2, **8th:** 1, **7th:** 2	5,000 credits	32,000 credits
12	**11th:** 1, **10th:** 2, **9th:** 1, **8th:** 2	7,000 credits	45,000 credits
13	**12th:** 1, **11th:** 2, **10th:** 1, **9th:** 2	10,000 credits	64,000 credits
14	**13th:** 1, **12th:** 2, **11th:** 1, **10th:** 2	15,000 credits	93,000 credits
15	**14th:** 1, **13th:** 2, **12th:** 1, **11th:** 2	22,500 credits	135,000 credits
16	**15th:** 1, **14th:** 2, **13th:** 1, **12th:** 2	32,500 credits	200,000 credits
17	**16th:** 1, **15th:** 2, **14th:** 1, **13th:** 2	50,000 credits	300,000 credits
18	**17th:** 1, **16th:** 2, **15th:** 1, **14th:** 2	75,000 credits	450,000 credits
19	**18th:** 1, **17th:** 2, **16th:** 1, **15th:** 2	120,000 credits	690,000 credits
20	**19th:** 1, **18th:** 2, **17th:** 1, **16th:** 2	200,000 credits	1,120,000 credits

TREASURE FOR NEW CHARACTERS

When your new campaign starts at a higher level, a new player joins an existing group, or a current player's character dies and they need a new one, your campaign will have one or more PCs who don't start at 1st level. In these cases, refer to the Character Wealth table, which shows how many common permanent items of various levels the PC should have, in addition to currency. A single item on this table is always a baseline item. If the player wants an armor or a weapon made of a precious material, they must pay for the precious material separately.

These values are for a PC just starting out at the given level. If the PC is joining a party that has already made progress toward the next level, consider giving the new character an additional item of their current level. If your party has kept the treasure of dead or retired PCs and passed it on to new characters, you might need to give the new character less than the values on the table or reduce some of the treasure rewards of the next few adventures.

Item Selection

You should work with the new character's player to decide which items their character has. Allow the player to make suggestions, and if they know what items they want their character to have, respect their choices unless you believe those choices will have a negative impact on your game.

At your discretion, you can grant the player character uncommon or rare items that fit their backstory and concept, keeping in mind how many items of those rarities you have introduced into your game. The player can also spend currency on consumables or lower-level permanent items, keeping the rest as credits. As usual, you determine which items the character can find for purchase.

A PC can voluntarily choose an item that has a lower level than any or all of the listed items, but they don't gain any more currency by doing so.

If you choose, you can allow the player to instead start with a lump sum of currency and buy whatever common items they want, with a maximum item level of 1 lower than the character's level. This has a lower total value than the normal allotment of permanent items and currency, since the player can select a higher ratio of high-level items.

BUYING AND SELLING ITEMS

Characters can usually buy and sell items only during downtime. An item can typically be sold for only half its Price, though art objects, gems, and raw materials can be sold for their full Price. The PCs' ability to sell items plays a big part in their ability to equip themselves how they want. However, it may not make sense for the story that PCs can find a buyer for every item, especially if they're selling multiple copies of the same thing. In a megacity, port of call, or major trade hub a PC should generally be able to sell whatever they want whenever they want thanks to convenient infosphere shopping, all-hours markets, and high population of buyers. They might be unable to sell items that wouldn't be in demand or have to take a lower percentage in remote places that have low populations or lack wealth.

If you don't want to deal with that level of detail, you can choose to make selling items more abstract, allowing the PCs to sell anything for half Price essentially at any time. Since this makes it far easier for PCs to outfit themselves how they want, they might be more powerful.



CHAPTER 2: BUILDING GAMES

Game Mastering can be an extremely creative endeavor, and this chapter gives you a suite of tools to create your own campaign or adventure. You can even customize your own creatures, hazards, and items to populate your game, or even invent your own game world!



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Where Chapter 1 gave you the information to run a game, whether it was your own creation or someone else's, this chapter digs deep into making the game fully your own. This chapter is organized into the following sections.

- **Campaign Structure** (page 64) discusses how you might connect multiple different events, encounters, and adventures together to create a longer story.
- **Adventure Design** (page 68) suggests common themes and tropes used in roleplaying adventures and gives advice on how to make sure your game is fun and exciting for your players.
- **Encounter Design** (page 75) explains how to create compelling and dynamic conflict in your game, be it violent combat or clever social debate.
- **Variant Rules** (page 82) contains changes to the base Starfinder rules that offer a different play experience from the baseline.
- **Afflictions** (page 88) provides a plethora of curses and diseases for use in your games.
- **Environment** (page 92) gives rules for overcoming obstacles and natural hazards that might be found in the surrounding area.
- **Hazards** (page 102) are harrowing traps that might protect a building or dungeon. This section is filled with hazards to challenge your players in their explorations.
- **Building Hazards** (page 113) offers advice on how to create your own brand-new hazards.
- **Building Creatures** (page 116) demonstrates a top-down approach for quickly and easily constructing the creatures and NPCs you want or need for any possible situation in your game.
- **Building Items** (page 134) teaches you how to create new pieces of treasure to delight your PCs.
- **Building Worlds** (page 138) explains how to go about building your own entire world or setting from scratch.

TO CREATE OR ADAPT

The material in this section can be used as an example for when you actually need to make your own rules elements or adventure and for when you can adapt. Many times, a small adjustment to an existing creature, item, adventure, or other part of the game can serve you just as well as building something brand new. For example, you might add a ranged attack to a classic Pathfinder creature or create a variant version of a creature from *Alien Core*. Before you delve into creating your own new content, ask yourself a few questions.

1. **Does something similar already exist?** Look beyond the surface level. Maybe you want a small, low-level robot that's sneaky. It might not look like a squox on the surface, but copying the statistics for the squox are going to get you mostly there.
2. **What do you need to change between your idea and the existing material?** This will help you decide between using the original rule with minimal modification, using the original with adjustments, starting with the original as a framework to build your own, or just starting from scratch. Typically, creating something from scratch is a lot more work than modifying existing content.
3. **How much time do you have to prepare the content?** If time is tight, you might want to spend your time on something with a bigger impact. The less important an element is to your game, or the less time you'll be using it at the table, the more likely you should modify something that already exists. Unless you're building your entire game world from scratch, you can usually wait to implement any new rules and creations until you think you'll need it for your next session.

SCOPE OF CHANGES

It's up to you to determine how much of your game you want to customize. Many GMs use the default rules and creatures and set their adventures in the Pact Worlds or another published game world. Other GMs devise and incorporate all-new creatures and places with strange themes that don't fit in the standard Starfinder game or galaxy. Neither of these approaches is inherently better than the others. The most important thing remains creating a story collaboratively with the rest of your group while having fun.

Determining what your group wants out of the game and setting makes a big difference here. If you're playing Starfinder with a major goal of exploring the Pact Worlds, it's more likely you'll use "stock" elements rather than creating new ones. On the other hand, it could be more interesting for your players to see brand-new things if they play with you to experience your own creative voice, or if they're experienced Starfinder players looking for variety.



CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Each adventure presents one contained story, but your campaign tells a more expansive one. Think of each adventure like an episode or arc and the campaign as a whole series. Though each adventure might tell a vastly different story, they should all tie into the themes and characters that stretch across the whole campaign.

A campaign interweaves multiple stories: the events of each adventure, the personal triumphs and failures of each PC, and the stories of NPCs who appear throughout. That means a campaign can become more than the sum of its parts. A campaign provides the overall structure for your Starfinder game. As you prepare for your campaign, you'll establish its scope and themes, which you'll then reinforce in the adventures and scenes that take place within it. When you start out, you'll likely have a core structure in mind for your campaign, but through play, it can—and should—grow and evolve.

CAMPAIGN LENGTH

The length of a campaign can range from just a few sessions to many years. Two main factors determine campaign length: how much time you need to complete the story and how much time players want to devote to the game.

You can estimate how long a campaign will take by looking at the amount of time you actually have to play, or the number of character levels you intend the characters to advance. It typically takes three to four sessions for a group to level up. Since you'll probably cancel sessions on occasion, playing once a week for a year results in roughly a 14-level campaign, playing every 2 weeks for a year gives you an 8-level campaign, and playing monthly allows for a 5-level campaign. If you play monthly, you might consider holding longer sessions and using fast advancement (800 XP to level up) or choosing story milestones to reach the next level. Some groups using milestone leveling might level up every session, or spend several sessions experiencing the new abilities available to them at a certain level, at group discretion.

Some campaigns go all the way to 20th level, ending after the player characters attain the height of power and confront the greatest threats any mortal could face. Others end at a lower level, after the group takes down a major villain or solves a crucial problem. And still other campaigns end when players become unable to attend or decide it's a good time to stop playing.

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You should have an end point in mind when you start a campaign. Still, you have to be flexible since you're telling the story alongside other players, and your initial expectations for the campaign might change over time. It pays to be conservative when estimating your campaign's length and scope. It's always tempting to run a 20-level epic campaign with complex, interwoven plots, but such games can fall apart long before the end if your group can play only once a month and the players have other responsibilities.

It's also important to talk to the other players about your progress and everyone's engagement with the campaign and characters. When you think you're heading toward a satisfying conclusion, check in with the other players. You might say, "I think we have about two sessions left. Does that work for everyone? Is there any unfinished business you want to take care of?" or "I know we said today was our last game, but the party's last *wish* ritual to reincarnate on another planet together inspired so much roleplay that I'm excited about playing a one-shot with those characters. Is anyone interested? Or do you want to start a new game with new characters?" This lets you gauge whether your assumptions match up with the rest of the group—and allows you to make any necessary adjustments if they don't.

BASIC STRUCTURES

When building your campaign, you can use these structures as a starting point. The Adventure Design section explains various styles of adventures on pages 69–72 that can be used to inspire the creation of the adventures in your campaign. For a campaign consisting of multiple adventures, you'll need to add some story elements that speak directly to the characters in your game rather than just to the events of the adventure. In other words, the characters should have individual goals in addition to the group's overall goals.

ONE-SHOT

A one-shot is an adventure that's played in one session. It works well for a highly thematic adventure using characters or concepts that players might not want to stick with long-term.

Adventures 1, typically exploration, horror, investigation, or a weird adventure
Top Level 1, but often starts at a higher level
Time Frame 1 session

BRIEF CAMPAIGN

This structure is meant for a brief, self-contained campaign. It can be ideal for introducing new players to Starfinder and can be extended to a longer campaign if the group wishes.

Adventures 2, typically one exploration or investigation followed by a higher level adventure; might be any type of adventure
Top Level 4–5
Time Frame 3 months weekly, 6 months biweekly

EXTENDED CAMPAIGN

An extended campaign works well for a dedicated group that might want to switch to a new campaign or a different game after a year or so. It allows for significant character and plot development but doesn't reach the higher levels of the game.

Adventures 5, typically with multiple adventures fitting the main theme of the campaign; might be any type of adventure
Top Level 11–13
Time Frame 1 year weekly, 1-1/2 years biweekly

EPIC CAMPAIGN

An ambitious and complex game, the epic campaign takes PCs all the way to level 20, pitting them against the greatest threats in the galaxy and beyond. This can be challenging in terms of time commitment and complexity, but it lets PCs develop into true legends, and the players will likely remember it for years.

Adventures 6 long adventures; might be any type of adventure
Top Level 20
Time Frame 1-1/2 years weekly, 3 years biweekly

THEMES

The themes you choose for your campaign are what distinguish it from other campaigns. They include the major dramatic questions of your story and the repeated use of certain environments or creatures, and they can also include embracing genres such as dystopian, high-tech, fantasy, war-torn, into the unknown, horror, weird, and more (see *Galaxy Guide*). The themes you choose for your campaign also suggest storyline elements you might use.

A storyline's themes usually relate to the backstories, motivations, and flaws of the player characters and villains. For example, if you've chosen revenge as one of the themes of your game, you might introduce a villain whose quest for revenge tears their life apart and causes tragic harm to those around them. You might choose a theme of love, leading to nonplayer characters involved in doomed romances, seeking to regain lovers they've lost, or courting the player characters.

You might choose to mix elements of classic high fantasy, such as the content of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, into your campaign. See page 241 for advice on how to combine this material with a Starfinder campaign, or vice versa.

LINKING ADVENTURES

In a campaign that includes multiple adventures, a smooth transition from one adventure to the next ties the story together. You might use NPCs who could appear in both adventures, a treasure or clue found in one adventure that becomes important in a later one, or even fallout from choices the PCs made in one adventure that causes the next adventure to take place or creates unforeseen complications. Related locations can help, too. Adventures that take place in the same or neighboring regions of space have an inherent link. If they take place in two different places, you'll need

a reason the PCs should travel between the two, and you can use this journey as a short, interstitial adventure or a risky trip through the Drift (or deep space) where random encounters with dangerous and marvelous alien creatures might occur.

Using similar locations and related creatures helps you form connections between disparate adventures. For example, you might have the players explore a frozen corporate outpost on Vesk-7 early on, then later travel to an icy plane filled with more difficult challenges that can be overcome using knowledge they've previously developed. Likewise, glitch gremlins might be tough enemies for your group at low levels, but as the PCs attain higher levels and the gremlins become mere minions of a powerful fey technomancer, the players feel a sense of progression. Over time, the players feel like their characters are becoming experts at negotiating with Veskarium soldiers, navigating the stars, battling daemons, navigating the Drift, or dealing with whatever the recurring elements are.

Consider how each adventure's theme plays into the campaign as a whole. You might want to keep similar or recurring themes, especially if each adventure is part of one overarching storyline. On the other hand, this can feel repetitive, and some groups prefer variety and seeing their characters play off of different situations. To convey shifting themes, you can show established parts of the world changing to reflect the new theme. For instance, if you're switching from a dystopian campaign to one with futuristic and fantasy elements, the PCs could buy their impounded starship back from an azrinaran oligarch on Apostae but then face magically controlled fungal constructs and corrupted Skyfire pairs on Triaxus after they arrive looking to join the legendary Skyfire Legion.

Player Goals

Ask what everyone enjoys and what your players would like to see in the game. You can use these ideas as touchstones to build off of. When you get into the campaign itself, the PCs' goals come to the forefront. Find out what each character wants to achieve and look for opportunities you can place in the game world and its adventures. Consider which part of the game most closely ties to each goal. A PC who wants to become a celebrity needs fame and interpersonal connections, so you can use NPC interactions to give them the resources they need. For a character whose purpose is to help people in danger, build some encounters that include people who need to be rescued. A character who wants to upgrade their gear and become more powerful will most likely enjoy getting a chance to find or shop for new equipment. Character goals can always be progressed through roleplay in downtime or between sessions.

Look for good times to recap the state of a character's goals and remind the player how their character has progressed, particularly when something changes in relation to their goals. Consider rewarding players who keep track of their character's goals and their progress, potentially giving out extra Hero Points to incentivize engaging with the campaign's long-term story. The Long-Term Goals section on page 45 gives you more details on how you can use goals in downtime.

Changing the World

As the group moves through the campaign, the events of their adventures and downtime should change the world and galaxy around them. Show this through the responses the characters get from other people, the scenery they see around them, and their environment. You might be able to anticipate some changes, but most will come up in play and require you to make adjustments later on.

Power Level

As the game progresses, the power level of the PCs and their foes increases. Going up in level brings new, stronger abilities into the game, and likewise, adventures bring in new monsters with commensurate capabilities. Higher-level adventures should present new challenges appropriate to the PCs' abilities, such as areas that can be accessed with flight at 7th level or higher. Beyond just the rules, PCs should elicit different reactions from the people they meet as their reputation spreads and they exhibit abilities beyond what most people have ever seen.

Recurring Villains

Enemies come and go, but a nemesis is forever. Consider including villains who can appear multiple times over the course of several adventures. They don't necessarily need to be masterminds. Imagine an unscrupulous mercenary who works for major villain after major villain, or a series of clones deployed over and over by a corrupt corporation or galactic leader. When you create a recurring villain, it's best not to make them too integral to the story since the PCs might take them down earlier than you expect! Have some contingency plans in place.

The advice about roleplaying NPCs on page 14 applies especially to these recurring villains. As they reappear throughout the campaign, they should change in some of the same ways PCs do. Think about how previous run-ins with the PCs have shaped the recurring villain's emotions and plans. Which PC do they have the biggest grudge against, and why? Do they bear scars from previous battles? Have they developed a countermeasure against a PC's spells or tactics? What's memorable about them?

Villain Goals

Just as PCs have goals, so do your villains. A recurring villain might have a vision for what the world should be and a step-by-step plan to get there. A plan gives you a clear way to progress the plot, and an underlying goal guides you in deciding what the NPC does if their plan goes awry. It can be especially helpful to contrast the villain's goals with those of the PCs. If a PC wants to start a long-haul freighting business, maybe a villain plans to get rich robbing merchant and cargo starships. Just like with the PCs' goals, show how the villain's

goal has impacted the world, even in small ways. Try to find ways the villain can make a difference, even if the PCs are successful against them. A villain will look ineffective if the PCs foil every single plot or plan. For instance, the villain might turn a memorable NPC to their cause, set an institution ablaze, or invade a planet.

STARTING THE CAMPAIGN

Before your first session begins, communicate back and forth with the players about the following details to make sure you've planned your campaign to fit their preferences, then recap and communicate your final decisions.

- Establish the expected schedule and, generally, how long you expect the campaign to last. It's okay if you aren't certain about the total length, but you should still give an estimate.
- Inform the players when and where the first session will take place, what they should prepare in advance, and what materials to bring. If you're running a session zero to create characters first (page 9), let them know. You might also need to tell them whether to bring food, drinks, and other supplies beyond what they'll use for the game itself if you're playing in person.
- Let the players of know any restrictions or extra options for character building. Even if you plan to run a session zero, give them a heads-up before the session starts.
- Tell the players where in the game universe the first session will take place.
- Give the players a basic idea of the genre or theme.

AT THE FIRST SESSION

If you're running a session zero, read the Session Zero section on page 9 for advice on your first session. For the first time you play through an adventure, follow these bits of advice.

- Recap the basics of the campaign you established earlier, particularly where it starts and any themes you feel will be important for the players to understand as they roleplay.
- Have the players introduce their characters. If they have detailed backstories, it's usually best that they start out just describing what the other PCs could learn from first impressions. If they want to go deeper into their backstory during play, they can do so later.
- Ask questions about the characters. Note down anything you think will be significant, so you can adjust your plans for later sessions. You'll want to keep doing this throughout play.
- Begin the adventure using the Starting a Session steps on page 11. For your first adventure, find a good place for the PCs to meet and a reason for them to be together.

STARTING AT A HIGHER LEVEL

A typical campaign starts at 1st level, but you can start at a higher level if you choose. This can be especially satisfying for a one-shot or short campaign, or if your group wants to play a specific adventure made for higher-level characters. The PCs should all start at the same level. They simply make a 1st-level character, then level them up the number of times needed to reach the starting level.

The Character Wealth table on page 61 indicates how much currency and what common items of various levels the character should start with. Let the players choose their own items as well as spend their currency on common items if they choose. This table gives them fewer items than they might have had if they'd gained items through adventuring, but it balances the fact that they can choose what items they want.

ENDING THE CAMPAIGN

A campaign might have a well-planned, emotionally resonant ending that executes perfectly, or the group might die in a ridiculous fashion at the worst time possible. The ending doesn't always match the idea you had in your head at the start of the campaign. Check in with your group, especially when you're getting close to the end of each adventure, to see how long they want the campaign to go on and if they're still having fun. Check in with yourself, too, and express your opinion to the other players. Ideally, you know at least a session in advance that the end is coming, allowing you to prepare for a thrilling conclusion. You might plan for the final session's gameplay to be a bit shorter–possibly just one big showdown–to allow time for an epilogue and for the group to reminisce and decompress at the end.

An epilogue can make the end of a campaign more fulfilling. First, let the group finish out their roleplaying in the final moments of the adventure until they're content. Then tell the group the results of what they accomplished in broad terms, with concrete details of what happens to certain places or allied NPCs. Ask the players what their characters do after the adventure. You might want to narrate a few short scenes. When your epilogue is done, thank everyone for playing. If the campaign ended in success for the PCs, give yourselves a round of applause. A victorious ending warrants celebration!

DEALING WITH FAILURE

If a campaign ends prematurely, get a sense from the players about whether they want to continue. The advice on Total Party Kills on page 33 should be helpful. If the campaign ended in a stranger way than a total party kill–say, a PC losing the powerful relic the villain needed to complete a master plan in a casino bet–you can still look for ways the campaign might continue. Maybe the PCs struggle to survive in the galaxy after the calamity, or maybe they have just enough time to still be able to stop the plan.

THE NEXT CAMPAIGN

If the group plays another campaign in the same setting that takes place after your previous campaign, think through the repercussions of the last campaign and change the galaxy as needed. You might introduce new elements into the setting that call back to the previous campaign: newly powerful factions, new settlements, or new options for player characters, such as backgrounds, all based on the impact the previous PCs made on the world.

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ADVENTURE DESIGN

Creating an adventure for your players can be one of the most fulfilling parts of being a GM. This is much more challenging than using a published one but lets you express yourself, be even more creative, and tailor the game directly to the players and their characters.



Adventure plotting can start at many different points. You might begin with a particular antagonist, then construct an adventure that fits that villain's theme and leads the group to them. Alternatively, you could start with an interesting location for exploration, create or choose a map, then populate it with adversaries and challenges appropriate to the setting.

PLAYER MOTIVATIONS

One of your most important and rewarding tasks is getting to know your players and what makes them tick, then implementing plot hooks that speak to their motivations. If your players all like similar things (maybe they all like epic storylines or all prefer tactical combat), your job will be a bit easier. For most groups, there's a mix of preferences and playstyles, and you'll want to put in a few detailed NPCs who appeal to one player's love of social scenes, a powerful villain or looming disaster to engage a player who loves stories of winning against overwhelming odds, and cute alien creatures that attract a player who's into having animal friends. If you're not sure what your players enjoy, ask them in advance what they'd like to see in the game!

Considering player motivations doesn't mean assuming you know what the players or their characters will do! It can be risky to expect PCs to react in certain ways or take certain paths. Knowing their motivations gives you a way to put in elements you expect will appeal to your players, but their decisions will still take the adventure in unexpected directions. You can try to think ahead when playing your sessions, but it's impossible to know how players will react in every imagined situation, or even how you might present the material that day. The important thing is getting the players engaged, not predicting the future.

THEME AND FEELING

Think about the emotional and thematic touchstones you want to hit during play. Good games elicit strong emotions, and planning for them can give an emotional arc to an adventure in addition to the narrative arc. Consider what you want players to feel as they play. Is it triumph? Dread? Sadness? Optimism? None of these will be the *only* emotions to come out, but they'll inform how you build the settings and NPCs. Adventure Recipes gives steps to effectively implement theme and feeling.

KEEPING IT VARIED

You can give players variety through the types of challenges the group faces (combat, social, problem-solving, and so on), the locations they explore, the NPCs they meet, the monsters they face, and the treasure they acquire. Even if you're building an enclosed "dungeon," or complex like a cramped space station or enclosed building, you don't want to place a combat in every room, or exploration will quickly become stale.

Think in terms of sessions. If your group gets through five scenes per session, how do you make one game session feel different from another? Maybe two of the scenes in each are fairly basic combat encounters, but if you make the other scenes significantly different, or even if you set the encounters in different environments, the sessions won't feel repetitive. Also think about the tools used to solve each situation. Maybe one requires complex negotiations, another brute force, and a third sneaking about. Aim to give everybody something compelling, and ideally targeted at their motivations and abilities.

ADVENTURE RECIPES

These procedures help you build an adventure skeleton or outline. You'll then go through and flesh out the details of the adventure, including adversaries and locations. As you play, you'll keep adjusting to fit the events of the game. Anything you haven't already introduced can be changed as needed. Just like with any recipe, you're meant to adjust the details to fit your group's preferences. You might stray far from your starting point, and that's OK!

These recipes use eight steps. You might want to look ahead to your future steps and make choices out of order based on what's most important for you to convey. The catch-all term "opposition" refers to the various adversaries and obstacles the PCs will face. The opposition should be thematically consistent but not necessarily monolithic. It might contain multiple individuals or groups who might not get along with one another.

- **Styles (page 69):** The overall vibe of your game, such as exploration, dystopian adventure, horror, infiltration, intrigue, military adventure, mystery, planar adventure, romantic adventure, or space opera. These frameworks offer guidelines for the number of sessions and types of encounters that work best.

- **Threats (page 72):** Thematic dangers to incorporate into your game, and ways to evoke them as you play. The style and threat are the core parts of your recipe.
- **Motivations (page 73):** Determine more specifically what the opposition's goals and motivations are.
- **Story Arcs (page 74):** This section gives you guidance on how to construct story arcs that will play out over your adventure and maybe beyond.
- **NPCs and Organizations (page 74):** The characters and factions you include should fit the theme.
- **Locations (page 74):** The adventuring sites and settlements featured in your adventure.
- **Encounters (page 74):** The individual rooms and locales within your adventuring sites, including the creatures and hazards found at these places.
- **Treasure (page 75):** The rewards you give out to characters after dealing with encounters.

STYLES

These frameworks for building your adventure include some basic elements to get you started outlining an adventure. Slot ideas from the threats section (page 72) into this structure, then customize as you see fit.

Exploration

Number of Sessions 3–4

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage to reach the complex or site (sometimes called a "dungeon" in fantasy-themed games); 3 voyages through long, trapped hallways or mazes; 1 secure hangar or other staging area; 2 secret rooms

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 8 low, 6 moderate, 2 severe. Many encounters can be bypassed through secret routes or by infiltrating the complex using skills and spells.

Roleplaying Encounters 4 conversations with security guards, workers, prisoners, or other creatures; 1 negotiation to establish a truce or business deal with the faction controlling the site

Encounter Tropes Laser-trapped hallways, security cameras, and robotic sentries, with occasional vaulted chambers, long hallways, catwalks, traps, and puzzles.

Dystopian Adventure

Number of Sessions 5–7

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage in outer space, plagued by attacks; 2–3 explorations of sites in urban environments or outer space; 1 prison break, heist, or other test of skill

Combat Encounters 4 trivial, 7 low, 7 moderate, 4 severe, possibly 1 extreme. Foes are often intelligent and represent rival factions, law enforcement, or outlaws.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits, 2 chances to best opponents with deception or threats, 2 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Stakes are often more personal, such as the PCs clearing their names from a false accusation or being paid to eliminate a problem. Betrayal, ambushes, and other duplicity. Urban disasters, piracy, and unfriendly crowds. Allies are often untrustworthy and might betray the PCs during the adventure. Downtime might include hard labor, exploring seedy night clubs and dives, or criminal activities.

Horror

Number of Sessions 1–2

Exploration Scenes 1 short voyage full of ill omens; 2–4 creepy areas to investigate, like haunted reactors or cursed magitech laboratories

Combat Encounters 2 moderate, 1 severe, possibly 1 extreme. Avoid trivial- and low-threat encounters, except as moments of relief in a longer adventure. Extreme-threat encounters against overwhelming foes are excellent in horror one-shots.

ADVENTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the advice and adventure recipes detailed here, reading other adventures is a great way to get ideas, whether they're published adventures or ones your friends have written. You can borrow ideas and structures if they work for your game and tweak as needed.

You don't need to go into the same level of detail you'd see in a published adventure. You might be able to get by with just an outline, some bullet points for each NPC, a breakdown of encounters, and a few rough maps. Or maybe for your style of running games, you prefer to have some text written about each scene, or even particular lines of dialogue. If you're creating your first adventure, it can be good to write out a little more than you need. Just keep in mind that things might change in play. If you prepared more than you actually used, that's normal! Detailing NPCs or locations in particular can be useful, especially if they're going to appear again. But in many of these cases, you'll add details at the table and can jot down those notes for later.

RUNNING YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

It's often easier to run an adventure you made yourself, but that's not true for everybody. If you notice as you run your adventure that your notes don't have enough for you to go on, you can be more thorough next time. And if something ended up inconsistent, there's nothing wrong with telling your players you want to revise something you previously said.

Because this is your own creation, it's closer to your heart. If the adventure doesn't go well, it can sting. Sometimes this is because of random chance, sometimes due to unforeseen decisions, and occasionally because you made a mistake. Those are all normal parts of the game! One of the things you'll internalize the more you run games is that you are a part of the creative process and don't need to be perfect.

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Roleplaying Encounters 2 conversations with doubtful authority figures, 1 opportunity to gather information and rumors, 1 revelation of a horrible truth

Encounter Tropes Surprising and jarring encounters, making it hard for the PCs to feel safe. Encounters that feel overwhelming, even when they're not. Retreat is often the right option (include a reasonable way for the PCs to escape). Environmental storytelling reveals terrible secrets.

Infiltration

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 1 voyage, or a tour of a site's location and defenses; 2–3 trapped rooms and vaults

Combat Encounters 4 low, 4 moderate, 1 severe. Most combat encounters can be bypassed with stealth and subterfuge.

Roleplaying Encounters 1–2 encounters with security patrols or workers in which the PCs must avoid suspicion or resort to combat

Encounter Tropes Secure complexes with locked and trapped doors, automated defenses, and security patrols. Victory conditions that are goal or deadline oriented—controlling a fortress for 10 minutes while someone uploads a virus into the server mainframe, robbing a bank, rescuing prisoners, and so on.

Intrigue

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 3–4 competitions, performances, or other tests of skill; 1–2 infiltrations or escapes

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 2 low, 4 moderate, 1 severe. Severe-threat encounters should be reserved for major reveals of the ongoing intrigue—an ally is revealed to be a foe, a schemer is exposed and calls their elite bodyguards, and so on.

Roleplaying Encounters 2–3 battles of wits; 2 political or courtroom scenes; 1 conversation with a cryptic source; 2 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Urban environments, including fights atop racing vehicles, around (and atop) furniture, and leaping or flying between rooftops. Ambushes in apparently safe social settings. Assassination attempts.

Military Adventure

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 1 long voyage and 2–3 patrols, or a tour of the defenses for an invasion; 2–3 trapped enemy outposts and enemy starship squads

Combat Encounters 4 low, 4 moderate, 1 severe. Most combat encounters should be made up of 2–4 foes, typically troopers with a range of capabilities.

Roleplaying Encounters 1–2 skill challenges to convince neutral parties to become allies or raise troops' morale, 1-2 conversations with commanding officers

Encounter Tropes Fortified battlegrounds with automated defenses and security patrols. Epic starship battles in

outer space or in atmosphere over a contested planet. Victory conditions that are goal or deadline oriented—defeating an enemy squad, capturing a planet or starship, infiltrating an enemy fortress, stealing an experimental weapon, and so on.

Mystery

Number of Sessions 2–3

Exploration Scenes 2–3 trapped rooms, concealed hideouts, or other tests of skill; 2 puzzles or investigations

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 4 low, 6 moderate, 6 severe. Solving the mystery uncovers an advantage over any powerful foe or reveals an important secret.

Roleplaying Encounters 1 battles of wits, 1 conversation with an unusual ally, 1 opportunity to gather information and rumors, 1 gathering to reveal the answer to the mystery

Encounter Tropes Encounters come naturally during investigations or upon discovering some element of the mystery. Multiple clues can send PCs to the same locations; if the mystery stalls, some creature that doesn't want the PCs to solve the mystery can attack to move the plot forward.

Planar Adventure

Number of Sessions 6–8

Exploration Scenes 3–4 long voyages through different planes, often using magic, Drift engines, spells, or a planar vessel, punctuated by combat; 1–2 scouting a demiplane, planar city or fortress, or other planar stronghold

Combat Encounters 4 low, 12 moderate, 6 severe, 2 extreme. Avoid trivial-threat encounters, except as set dressing to introduce a new plane.

Roleplaying Encounters 4 conversations with bizarre creatures, including some with alien ways of thinking; 4 opportunities to gather information and rumors

Encounter Tropes Fights showcasing otherworldly environs—in the churning colors of the Drift, in hurricane-force winds, on chunks of metal floating along rivers of lava, atop bottomless pits, or inside the cockpits of 100-foot-tall magical engines breaching the gates of Hell.

Romantic Adventure

Number of Sessions 4–6

Exploration Scenes 1 tour of a port of call; 1 adventure into the outskirts to fight bandits, hunt, or preserve wildlife; 1 tournament to prove a PC's love or outdo a rival

Combat Encounters 2 trivial, 3 low, 6 moderate, 1 severe. Emphasize emotional stakes and battles that end with the loss of honor or pride, not life.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits, 1 gala or party, 1 entreaty before a socialite or political leader, 2 scenes of relaxation or carousing with unexpected import

Encounter Tropes Duels—social or combat—against romantic rivals. PCs and their foes fight only for a purpose or cause. Savvy enemies have strong connections to the PCs. Rivals might become lovers.

BUILDING A SANDBOX

In a "sandbox" game, you give the players a sizable location to explore and let them decide how to go about it. A sandbox doesn't have as many time-sensitive events as a directed adventure, and the flow of the game is driven more by the players than by the opposition. You can put self-contained dungeons or other locations within the sandbox, but it's up to the players when and how to visit them or deal with them.

To make a sandbox, create about triple the number of encounters and spread them out among multiple locations or factions. You can expect the PCs won't deal with all of them. In most cases, you'll want to determine where the PCs are headed next before the end of a session so you can prepare for the next session. Depending on the size and complexity of the location, the number of encounters might be much higher. Treat each sub-area as a kind of mini-adventure and only loosely sketch it until you know what the PCs' plans are.



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Space Opera

Number of Sessions 6–8

Exploration Scenes 2 long voyages in outer space, punctuated with combat; 1 exploration of a dangerous complex, starship or street race, or other test of skill

Combat Encounters 4 trivial, 10 low, 12 moderate, 4 severe.

Roleplaying Encounters 2 battles of wits; 4 conversations with potential allies

Encounter Tropes Unique environments and terrain for dynamic battles. Boarding a starship during a space battle, fighting atop skyscrapers, racing enercycles, dogfights between starships, and so on. Use difficult terrain sparingly, coupled with creative ways to get around it. Large groups of low-level enemies the PCs can defeat with ease.

THREATS

Think of each type of threat as the deep, visceral danger the enemies represent. NPCs should be avatars of the threat, whether they're enemies who represent different aspects of the threat or allies and bystanders damaged by it. Each threat entry gives a brief description, followed by some bullet points you can use to guide you in expressing the consequences of the threat. This is followed by monsters that typify this theme. As always, you can come up with your own thematic threats too!

Corruption

The opposition wants to weaken or even change the motivation of a place, person, institution, ideal, or group.

- Show the effects of corruption on people and places, especially those closely connected to the PCs. Once-safe areas become less friendly and present threats, allies become unable to help or even turn against the PCs.
- Make enemies subtle; patient; willing to allow rumors, lies, diseases, and poisons time to take effect. In battle, they might be satisfied to curse PCs and their allies or otherwise inflict long-term afflictions, then retreat.
- Contrast the corruption with education, healing, and working toward progress that uplifts everyone.
- When the PCs make progress, allow them to expose agents of corruption and to inoculate allies and neutral parties against the growing threat or educate them about it.

Foes fiends, Midwives, psychic fungus, undead

Devastation

The opposition wants to destroy or lay waste to a place, person, institution, ideal, or group.

- Show the effects of destruction on people and places, especially those the PCs hold dear. Show them desperate, devoid of resources, and psychologically changed.
- Make enemies hard to reason with and overwhelming in number. In battle, they want not just to win, but to kill, maim, or devour.
- Contrast devastation with forces of preservation and order.
- When the PCs make progress, show the slow recovery from devastation.

Foes dragons, daemons, Swarm

Extremism

The opposition seeks a massive change—one they think is for the better. Their violent means of achieving it put them in conflict with the PCs.

- Demonstrate the ruthlessness of the enemy, especially the discrepancy between their care for their cause and their ambivalence or hatred toward everything else.
- Have enemies focus purely on their goal. Have them fall back on their rhetoric or dogma to justify themselves.
- If something about the extremists' cause is just—such as preserving the natural world or protecting their people—reveal the foes' sympathetic side. Demonstrate the horror of what they're fighting against in addition to the horror of the way they fight it.
- When the PCs make progress, show uncertainty or demoralization in their foes, possibly even desertion in their enemies' ranks.

Foes angels, cultists, jinsuls, terrorists

Mayhem

The opposition is a force for mayhem, without any greater plan or long-term goal. It might be a mindless force of violence such as a wounded beast, or a thinking foe that simply revels in causing chaos and damage.

- Mayhem is easy to track and find, often leaving a trail of destruction in its path. Show how the senseless violence causes uncertainty and fear, disrupting both settlements and the natural order of things.
- A single powerful foe is a common source of mayhem, but a pack, herd, cult, or secret society could also be to blame. The source of the mayhem might have resulted from the natural order being out of balance or might be a distraction set off by a different foe looking to use it to further its own goals.
- Emphasize the cascading effects of unchecked mayhem. Normal trade, travel, and similar systems are disrupted, causing problems far from the immediate location of violence and disruption.
- When the PCs make progress, show how resilient systems can recover from massive disruptions but might need additional help or protection.

Foes akatas, beasts, bloodbrothers, dinosaurs, gremlins, orocorans

Subjugation

The opposition wants to rule over a group, location, or even the world. Their ultimate objective is to control and rule.

- Show how groups submit to subjugation rather than suffer the consequences of resistance. The PCs see elements of culture destroyed to ensure subjugation—are religions and churches destroyed, subverted, or replaced? Are lackeys put in place to keep oppressed populations in line?
- Make enemies self-righteous, focused, and in control of groups they've previously subjugated. Fights aren't just for the sake of violence, but steps toward greater control.
- Show opposition: open conflict, rebellion, secret groups, sabotage, and countercultural art. Give PCs the opportunity to support or participate in each.
- When the PCs make progress, have previously cowed or neutral parties be moved to rebel.

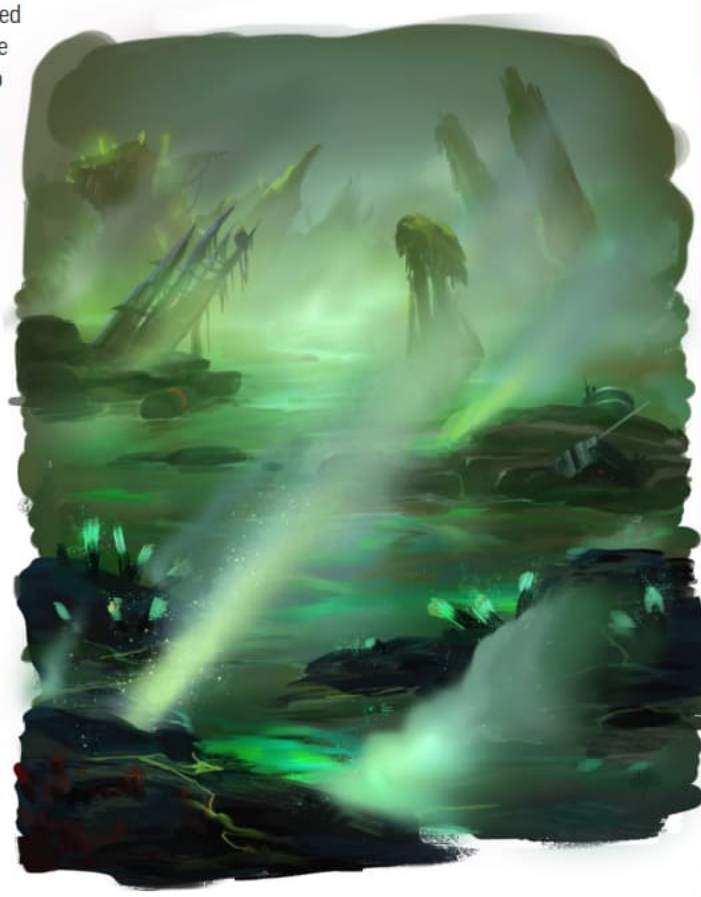
Foes aeon guards, Corpse Fleet, devils, dragons, imperial troopers, Swarm

MOTIVATIONS

Think about your opposition, and what their goals and motivations are. The motivation of the opposition needs to match your threat. If you have multiple adversaries, their motivations should all work toward your theme, but they might have different goals and act more as rivals or enemies. Motivations should be more than one dimensional. There should be a reason for every action the opposition takes—not necessarily a good one or a smart one, but a believable one. Be true to each character!

Consider these questions so you can use the answers when deciding what the opposition will do.

- What does the opposition want?
- Who or what does the opposition fear? (And no, "the PCs" isn't an answer.)
- Why is the opposition sure to succeed? If the PCs don't do anything, what makes the opposition unstoppable?
- What are the opposition's weaknesses? How can they be bribed or tricked? What's something they ignore that might be used against them?



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STORY ARCS

Keep several story arcs in mind. Most of these arcs will be driven by the opposition in the early going, but PCs might initiate their own story arcs. Think of what the beginning, middle, and end of each arc might look like. Imagine a logical end point the arc would reach if nothing else changes. Then, adjust it based on events in the game. As changes occur, revisit the end point you've imagined. If the adversary's plan has been derailed, what might they do instead? Story arcs should reflect the theme of the adventure and be well-positioned to show off motivations and reflect the PCs' choices.

Many arcs will last only for the duration of one adventure, but others build up and recur across the whole campaign. Include some of each so you have variety. This also provides closure, as the players can see some storylines wrapped up in the short term and others over a long period. Too many dangling plot threads can result in some being forgotten or make players feel overloaded.

Touchstones like the ones below make a story arc adaptable, not too restricted to specific scenes or characters.

- **Use motifs.** Use repeated thematic elements, visuals, phrases, and items to reinforce the connection between one adventure or segment of the story and another. The motif can also build in complexity as you move further along in the overarching story.
- **Follow character growth.** Respond to how the PCs changed in previous adventures. Their next undertaking should reflect who they are now.
- **Escalate!** Build on the previous story and show that the next threat is scarier. The first adventure might endanger a port of call, the next a planet, the next the whole system of planets orbiting a star, and so on.
- **Bring in recurring characters.** A recurring character is especially strong if they appear in similar circumstances each time. For instance, a space pirate might appear in the campaign only when she wants the PCs to undermine her rivals or is trying to rob them.
- **Make each adventure count.** While developing an arc, don't diminish individual adventures by making what happened in them inconsequential compared to the larger story. Illustrate the consequences of such adventures so the players feel a sense of accomplishment for completing one before they move onto the next. Each adventure needs some sort of denouement to show immediate and lingering effects of the PCs' victory or defeat.
- **Make choices matter.** Describe the consequences of PC actions and allow their choices to shape the story.

NPCS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Allied, neutral, and adversarial NPCs and organizations can all contribute to the theme. You'll want most to follow the theme directly, like the examples in Threats on page 72. However, you can add a few counterpoints to the theme. For example, a horror game might include one or two NPCs who are more hopeful, either to grant respite from the dread or to kill off to show just how bad things are. Including NPCs who aren't adversaries makes the game universe feel more real. It also increases the stakes, as PCs have people to care about, protect, and socialize with. You'll often find that NPCs you create will become more or less important than you expected. You can "demote" an NPC if the players don't find them interesting or "promote" them if the PCs like them more than expected.

LOCATIONS

Memorable settings that include mysterious and fantastical locations for players to visit can elicit the players' curiosity. Exploring each location should be a treat in itself, not just a chore the players must complete to get from one fight to the next. As you create a locale, picture it in your mind's eye and write down minor details you can include as you narrate the game. Describing decorations, landmarks, wildlife, peculiar smells, and even temperature changes make a place feel more real. See Quick Environmental Details on page 39 for some ideas.

Beyond monsters and loot, your locations can include environment-based challenges, from environmental conditions like blizzards to puzzles, traps, or other hazards. These challenges should suit your adventure's location: barrels of radioactive waste in an old power plant, clouds of acidic gas on an alien planet, or high-tech defenses left armed aboard an abandoned starship.

Additional Guidance: building your own hazards (page 113), environments (page 92), hazards (page 102)

ENCOUNTERS

A robust set of encounters forms the backbone of your adventure. Encounters often feature combat with other creatures, but they can also include hazards, or you might create social encounters in which characters duel only with words. The rules for building encounters appropriate to your group's level begin below.

Some adventures have a clear and direct progression, with encounters occurring at specific times or in a specific order. Others, such as a research station filled with interconnected rooms the group can investigate in any order, are nonlinear, and the group can face encounters in any order—or even avoid them entirely. Most adventures are somewhere in between, with some keystone encounters you know the characters will need to contend with, but others that are optional.

Additional Guidance: building your own creatures (page 116), building your own hazards (page 113), encounter design (page 75)

TREASURE

Your adventure should give out an amount of treasure that's appropriate to the characters' level. You can dole out treasure in all kinds of ways. Treasure could be items carried by an adversary, rewards from a patron for completing a mission, or a shipping crate full of goods guarded by a monster. It's best to spread treasure throughout an adventure rather than stockpiled in a single hoard. This gives the players incremental rewards, letting their characters advance in frequent small steps rather than giant leaps separated by many hours of play.

Additional Guidance: assigning treasure (page 58)

ENCOUNTER DESIGN

Encounters play a fundamental part in roleplaying games, but it can be tricky to know where to start when building them. It's important to follow the rules and guidelines, but creating a compelling encounter goes beyond that. Good encounters have a place in the story, compelling adversaries, interesting locations, and twists and turns to make them dynamic.



Encounter design goes hand in hand with location, map, and adventure design. You might set an adventure in a futuristic cityscape and populate it with tech creatures and hazards. Or you might have a sentry robot in mind and structure a section of your complex to fit that creature.

When you're starting out, straightforward encounters of low or moderate threat can let you get your bearings. Then, you can increase complexity as you get more confident and as the PCs collect more tools to use against their foes. The more encounters you build, the more comfortable you'll get with your own personal style. You can always come back here to get more ideas or advice on executing a certain type of encounter.

COMBAT THREATS

The most common type of encounter is a combat encounter, where the PCs face other creatures. Combat encounters are strictly governed by rules; the guidelines that follow will help you build combat encounters that pose appropriate challenges for your group. Building hazard encounters works the same way.

To build a combat encounter, first decide how the encounter fits in the adventure as a whole. Then, estimate how much of a threat you want the encounter to pose, using one of five categories below.

Trivial-threat encounters are so easy that the characters have essentially no chance of losing. They're unlikely to spend significant resources unless they're particularly wasteful. These encounters work best as warm-ups, palate cleansers, or reminders of how awesome the characters are. A trivial-threat encounter can still be fun to play, so don't ignore them just because of the lack of challenge.

Low-threat encounters present a veneer of difficulty and typically use some of the party's resources. However, it would be rare or the result of very poor tactics for the entire party to be seriously endangered.

Moderate-threat encounters are a serious challenge to the characters, though unlikely to overpower them completely. Characters usually need to use sound tactics and manage their resources wisely to come out of a moderate-threat encounter ready to continue on and face a harder challenge without resting.

Severe-threat encounters are the hardest encounters most groups of characters have a good chance to defeat. These encounters are appropriate for important moments in your story, such as confronting a final boss. *Use severe encounters carefully*—there's a good chance a character could die, and a small chance the whole group could. Bad luck, poor tactics, or a lack of resources can easily turn a severe-threat encounter against the characters, and a wise group keeps the option to disengage open.

Extreme-threat encounters are so dangerous that they're likely to be an even match for the characters, particularly if the characters are low on resources. This makes them too challenging for most uses! *Use an extreme encounter only if you're willing to take the chance the entire party will die.* An extreme-threat encounter might be appropriate for a fully rested group of characters that can go all-out, for the climactic encounter at the end of an entire campaign, or for a group of veteran players using advanced tactics and teamwork.

XP BUDGET

Once you've selected a threat level, it's time to build the encounter. You have an XP budget based on the threat, and each creature costs some of that budget. Start with the monsters or NPCs that are most important to the encounter, then decide how you want to use the rest of your XP budget. Many encounters won't match the XP budget exactly, but they should come close. The XP budget is based on a group of four characters. If your group is larger or smaller, see Different Party Sizes on page 60.

ENCOUNTER BUDGET

Threat	XP Budget	Character Adjustment
Trivial	40 or less	10 or less
Low	60	20
Moderate	80	20
Severe	120	30
Extreme	160	40

CREATURE XP AND ROLE

Creature Level	XP	Suggested Role
Party level – 4	10	Low-threat lackey
Party level – 3	15	Low- or moderate-threat lackey
Party level – 2	20	Any lackey or standard creature
Party level – 1	30	Any standard creature
Party level	40	Any standard creature or low-threat boss
Party level + 1	60	Low- or moderate-threat boss
Party level + 2	80	Moderate- or severe-threat boss
Party level + 3	120	Severe- or extreme-threat boss
Party level + 4	160	Extreme-threat solo boss

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QUICK ADVENTURE GROUPS

If you want an easy framework for building an encounter, you can use one of the following basic structures and slot in monsters and NPCs.

- **Boss and Lackeys (120 XP):** One creature of party level + 2, four creatures of party level – 4
- **Boss and Lieutenant (120 XP):** One creature of party level + 2, one creature of party level
- **Elite Enemies (120 XP):** Three creatures of party level
- **Lieutenant and Lackeys (80 XP):** One creature of party level, four creatures of party level – 4
- **Pair (80 XP):** Two creatures of party level
- **Troop (80 XP):** One creature of party level, two creatures of party level – 2
- **Squad (60 XP):** Six creatures of party level – 4

CHOOSING CREATURES

In all but the most unusual circumstances, you'll select creatures for your encounter that range from 4 levels lower than the PCs' level to 4 levels higher (see the Creature XP and Role table on page 75). Each creature has a part to play in your encounter, from a lowly lackey to a boss so mighty it could defeat the entire party single-handedly.

Each creature costs some of the XP from your XP budget for the encounter, based on its level compared to the levels of the characters in your party. For instance, if the PCs are 5th level, a 2nd-level creature is a "party level – 3" creature, a lackey appropriate for a low- to moderate-threat encounter, and it costs 15 XP in an encounter's XP budget. Party level is typically equal to the level of all the characters in the party (find more detail on page 57).

DIFFERENT PARTY SIZES

For each additional character in the party beyond the fourth, increase your XP budget by the amount shown in the Character Adjustment value for your encounter on the Encounter Budget table on page 75. If you have fewer than four characters, use the same process in reverse: for each missing character, remove that amount of XP from your XP budget. Note that if you adjust your XP budget to account for party size, the XP awards for the encounter don't change—you'll always award the amount of XP listed for a group of four characters.

It's best to use the XP increase from more characters to add more enemies or hazards, and the XP decrease from fewer characters to subtract enemies and hazards, rather than making one enemy tougher or weaker. Encounters are typically more satisfying if the number of enemy creatures is fairly close to the number of player characters.

VARIETY

Variety in encounters is essential to let players try new tactics and give different PCs chances to shine as they face foes with weak points they're uniquely suited to exploiting. Consider the following forms of encounter variety.

- **Theme:** Look for ways to include varied creatures and locations. Even if the PCs are fighting the undead privateers of the Corpse Fleet, they should encounter other creatures, too!
- **Difficulty:** A string of moderate-threat encounters can feel flat. Use low- and even trivial-threat encounters to give PCs chances to really shine, and severe-threat encounters for especially powerful enemies. Extreme-threat encounters should be used sparingly for enemies who match the threat posed by the PCs and have a solid chance of beating them! The adventure recipes on page 68 include a mix of combat difficulties that can be useful to look at.
- **Complexity:** Many encounters should be simple. Save complexity for important or memorable fights.
- **Encounter Composition:** The number of creatures per encounter and their levels should vary. Higher-level single enemies, squads of enemies, and large numbers of lackeys all feel different.
- **Setup:** Not all encounters should start and end the same way. PCs might sneak up on unprepared enemies, get ambushed by foes hunting them, enter into a formal duel, or find a diplomatic overture fails and turns into a fight. On the other side, enemies might all be taken out, retreat, beg for mercy, or even shift the encounter to a chase or transform into another phase.
- **Terrain:** Encounters should account for different types of movement and ranged weapons. Elevation can increase range in close quarters. Adding a hazard, cover, or other terrain features changes a combat and can make a familiar map feel dynamic.

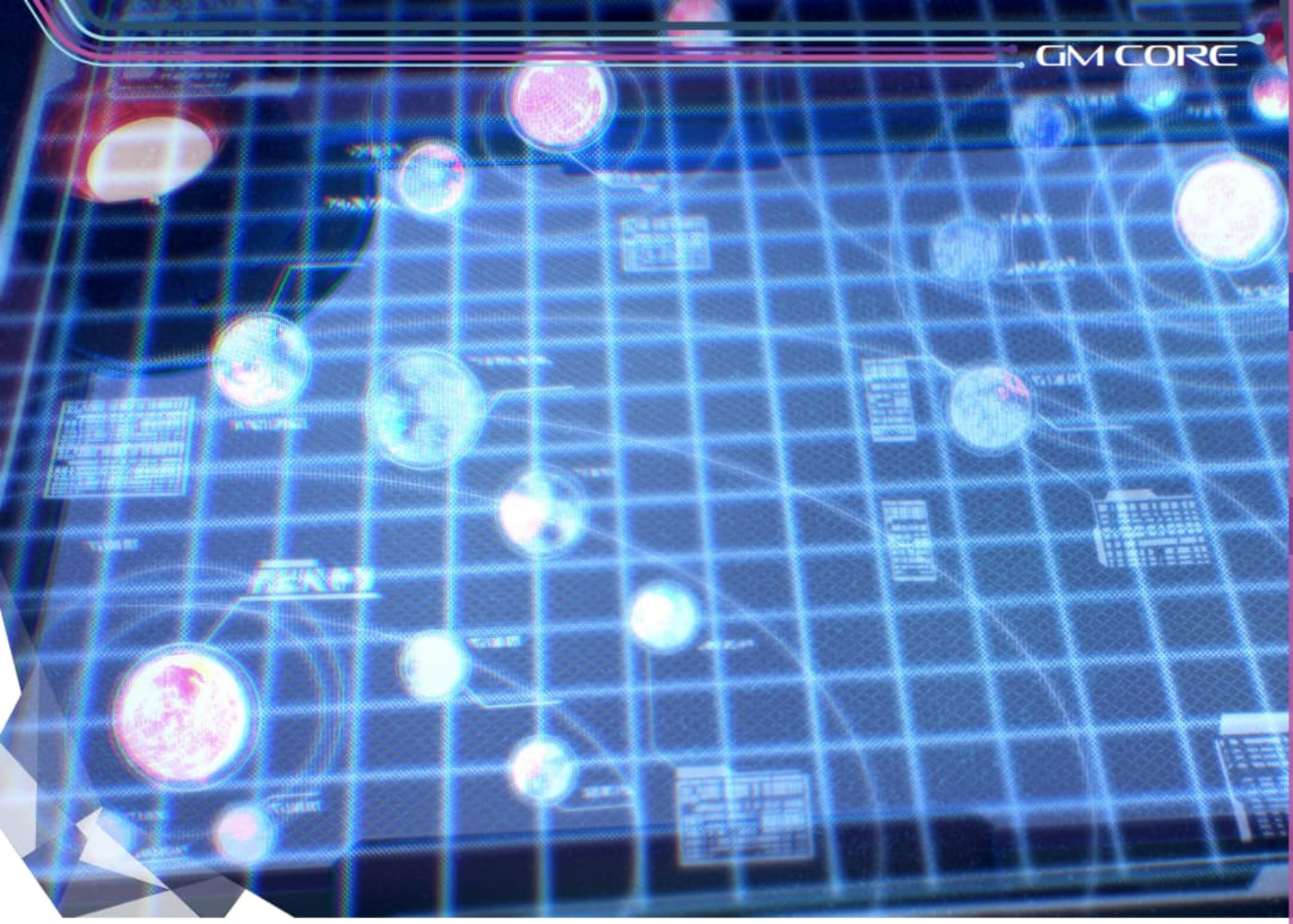
ENCOUNTER LOCATIONS

Choose compelling settings for your encounters. When encounters take place in a building or space station, the most significant environmental features originate from the occupants, both past and present. Think about their tastes, biology, or wealth. These features could be natural, such as the sickening decay of partially frozen prey in the snow cave of a predator. They could also be chemical, such as a cloud of poisonous gas, or magical, such as a strange electric current that arcs between a computer console and the walls and occasionally leaps out at passersby.

In some cases, you'll have a location in which an enemy always appears, and you can design your location to suit that specific creature. Other times, an encounter might appear in a variety of places, such as a security guard or wandering driftdead. In these cases, you'll need several terrain and structure options so there's something interesting about the environment no matter where the battle takes place.

MAPS AND TERRAIN

Features on the map have a substantial impact on the flow of combat. Three considerations to keep in mind when designing



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a map are maneuverability, line of sight, and attack ranges. Even empty rooms and corridors can provide variety based on their size and shape. Narrow passageways make natural choke points. In particularly small rooms, space is at a premium, favoring melee combatants and making area effects hard to aim without friendly fire. By contrast, huge areas lend themselves to spread-out combat, which gives plenty of room to use all manner of abilities but poses challenges for ones with limited range. To make large rooms more interesting, add furniture, columns, or other features the PCs and their foes can duck behind for cover. Also consider how far away combatants start from their cover, as spending multiple actions to reach cover can make it a far less attractive option.

INHABITANT OR INTRUDER?

In most cases, the PCs enter territory that's far more familiar to their foes than it is to them. NPCs and monsters who live in an area are likely to be adapted to its dangers, either because they know where they are and how to avoid them or because they're unaffected by them. A CEO in his penthouse might bait a PC into walking into a trap programmed to attack intruders. Marshland might be troublesome terrain for most PCs, but it poses little inconvenience to amphibious creatures. When using creatures with the ability to burrow, climb, or swim, consider incorporating features such as mazelike corridors, high walls with platforms, or rivers. If the foes are smaller or larger than the PCs, consider including paths, vents, staircases, or narrow passages that one side of the fight can use more effectively.

Sometimes, though, the PCs must defend their own base from intruders. In these situations, you're flipping the script, so give the PCs time to trap and ward the area. Watching the invaders fall prey to hazards and ambushes can be a delightful change of pace for your players.

WILD WEATHER

On a clear, sunny day, the PCs see clearly and fight without obstruction, but adding wind, precipitation, or fog creates additional challenges. Rain creates sloshy, muddy ground that slows movement, and cold weather introduces the threat of slippery patches of ice. Only the most extreme temperatures have a direct impact on the PCs during an encounter, but a slog through blistering heat or freezing cold can leave the PCs worn out and more vulnerable to foes. Light levels play a key role in both outdoor and indoor encounters. Although flashlights are plentiful, their reach is limited, and lights are sure to draw attention in dark places.

UNEXPECTED INFRASTRUCTURE

The hidden infrastructure of a typical building or spaceship likely contains numerous mechanical, electronic, and plumbing features concealed in walls, ceilings, and floors that are unlikely to be a part of even the most comprehensive map or room description. While modern infrastructure can usually be ignored, a crafty or panicking player might choose to attempt to make use of both the described and inferred features of a constructed environment. You should always feel comfortable

explaining to a PC before they waste actions that their character doesn't think the idea is possible given the limited amount of time and resources available during an encounter.

If you're up to the challenge of adjudicating these features on the fly, you can find similar environmental effects and guidelines for environmental damage on page 92. It should probably take an entire round (or more) to complete the setup, which can give you some time to consider an appropriate reward for a PC's efforts. For example, if a PC wants to find a live power line to shock a robot, you might require a Crafting or Engineering Lore check to determine where they can find a line in the wall, an Athletics check to Force Open a panel in the wall, and an Interact action to grab the wires safely enough for the PC to Strike with them next round. Knowing it will take 4 actions with a chance of failure is usually enough to dissuade a PC from attempting that sequence of actions, but the rewards can make for a memorable story!

BUDGETING FOR TERRAIN

If you include terrain that's tricky to navigate or takes extra work to deal with, consider whether it should count toward the encounter's XP budget. A fight that requires Climbing, Swimming, Flying, or pushing through difficult terrain can be tougher—especially if the enemies have protection from ranged attacks. Think about the impact of the terrain in advance, especially if the battle would already be a severe threat, or you might kill the party. Consider the effects and ease of finding cover as well as the maximum range of the weapons being used by all combatants. You can pick an equivalent monster level for your terrain and factor that into your budget, or just assign extra XP at the end if the threat without terrain is on the low or moderate end.

ENEMY MOTIVATIONS

Every encounter should happen for a reason. Consider a creature's motivation to fight. Is it defending its home? Robbing to enrich itself? Following sadistic impulses? Simply being paid to fight? You might realize a creature doesn't have a compelling motivation or that the PCs have done something that eliminates the impetus to fight. In that case, the encounter doesn't need to happen! Your game might be more satisfying if the PCs' clever actions avoid the fight—provided you award them XP accordingly.

MORALE

Think how an enemy reacts when a fight is going poorly for them—or well! Enemies who do something other than fight to the death make an encounter more dynamic and believable. While PCs occasionally encounter truly fanatical zealots or single-minded creatures that would never back down from a fight, most creatures—even non-sapient creatures like animals—back down from a battle they're obviously losing. This normally means foes fleeing at a certain point, potentially ending the encounter, but if the PCs need to capture those opponents, it could add a secondary objective and split their focus. Look at how differences in morale between participants impact the fight. For instance, after the bone sage's living pawns surrender to the PCs, he might activate a latent magic he implanted within them, killing them and merging their bodies into an enormous undead abomination. An enemy's morale could even change the encounter from combat to social, as the PCs enter negotiations over a surrender or try to convince foes of the errors of their ways.

DYNAMIC ENCOUNTERS

While you can certainly create enjoyable encounters by placing a group of opponents in a square room with little else, you have numerous tools to create encounters that are more interactive and dynamic. These tools can challenge your players to invent new strategies, inspire interesting character decisions, and make your setting richer.

No encounter needs to use all of the elements presented here, and not all encounters need more than one or two. The more complex a dynamic encounter is, the longer it takes to run and the more demanding it is. In general, these tools are perfectly suited for boss encounters, for memorable foes, and as a spice to add throughout your campaign however often works best for you and your players.

HAZARDS IN COMBAT

In isolated encounters where the PCs have plenty of time to recover from hazards' effects, simple hazards can feel more like speed bumps than true challenges. But when combined with other threats, even simple hazards can prove perilous. A noisy explosion can draw attention, allowing foes to burst through the door for a dramatic start to the encounter. Radiation is especially tricky as it can cause the PCs' gear to glitch, which can be especially devastating in encounters where the PCs rely on tech gear to move, such as jetpacks, or attack enemies who are far away. Simple hazards can also be an active part of an encounter, particularly if the foes know how to avoid triggering them.

As their name suggests, complex hazards are a more powerful tool for encounters. Because they continue to act, they're an ongoing presence in the fight. When combined with hostile creatures, complex hazards offer the PCs plenty of choices for what they want to do next. This is particularly true if foes benefit from the hazard. Should the PCs first disable the array of pipes spewing flammable gas into the room, or should they prioritize the fire elemental creeping closer and closer to the growing cloud of explosive fumes? There's no right answer, and the PCs' choices have a clear impact on the obstacles they face. Hazards in combat shine when they give the PCs ways to contribute meaningfully other than dealing damage to a creature. Interesting actions to disable a hazard are a fun way to give several PCs something fresh and different to do rather than piling on damage.

EVOLVING BATTLEFIELDS

While some battlefields are relatively static, allowing the PCs and foes to clobber each other until one side wins, complex or evolving battlefields can lead to far more memorable encounters. One of the most straightforward ways to create an evolving battlefield is with dynamic environmental features. Maybe the floating platforms that make up the room's floor shuffle around on their own turn each round, or various squares teleport creatures to different locations—possibly between two rooms where separate battles take place simultaneously. These dynamic features have

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some overlap with complex hazards, though they don't tend to be an opposition or obstacle specifically threatening the PCs.

Similarly, a third party in the encounter, perhaps a rampaging monster or a passing security robot, could pose a danger to both sides but potentially benefit either. For instance, perhaps the PCs or their foes could harness this third party as a dangerous but powerful ally with a successful skill check of some kind or by making a risky bargain.

Sometimes the evolving battlefield is more of a state change, or series of state changes, and less of a constant presence. For instance, defeating the rogue AI controlling a space station could cause systems aboard the station to malfunction, perhaps turning off the artificial gravity and forcing the PCs to deal with the remaining robots while floating. Major physical changes to the environment, such as the collapsed portions of a room rising and falling or water beginning to rush in and fill the room, can force the PCs to rethink their plans to handle the new situation. Sometimes the evolving battlefield is more of an unexpected plot twist that occurs in the middle of the encounter. Perhaps the evil tyrant reveals that they were a dragon all along, or security robots arrive to help whichever side is outmatched. Whatever you choose, make sure it changes things up and makes the encounter feel more dynamic and different. For instance, raising up a portion of the battlefield that isn't particularly relevant when neither the PCs nor their foes are likely to care is less interesting than raising up the pedestal holding the datapad the PCs and their enemies are trying to recover.

COMBINING AND SEPARATING ENCOUNTERS

Picture this: the PCs storm a fortified outpost. They choose to eschew stealth in favor of a direct approach. A drone spots them and raises an alarm. The sound of alarms blares throughout the base as enemy troops ensure that everyone is ready for a fight. And then, they politely wait in whatever room they were already standing in for the PCs to come and attack them. It sounds pretty unrealistic, and it feels unrealistic at the table. Many players find it far more satisfying when their foes take reasonable actions and countermeasures against them, such as moving to defensible positions behind cover or banding together with allies. Taken to an extreme, combining encounters can quickly lead to fights that are unwinnable, so be careful. In the outpost example, some troops might come out to attack the PCs, while others cluster around the control station. Perhaps each individual patrol of soldiers around the castle is a trivial-threat encounter, but as they gather together, they form groups of gradually escalating threat. Such groups give the PCs a sense of how challenging their opposition is, so that if a fight against six soldiers is a challenge, they won't try to pick a fight with 30. When the PCs' foes amass into an overwhelming force, give the PCs fair warning and a chance to retreat and try again another day. Of course, if the PCs come back after the alarm has been raised, the soldiers are likely to change their rotations to better secure the base.

The most common reason to separate an encounter into multiple pieces is to set up a combined encounter, like when an injured foe retreats to gather reinforcements. This provides the PCs with a choice: do they ignore the fleeing enemy and focus on the battle in front of them, or do they split their own forces, weighing the risk of being led into a dangerous encounter against the chance of stopping later foes from preparing for their approach? An encounter might also separate into pieces because of dramatic changes to the battlefield, such as a collapsing ceiling or a magical wall that prevents those on each side of the barrier from accessing the other without spending actions to bypass the obstruction.

PITFALLS

This section arms you with a wide variety of useful tricks to add interest to your encounters, but you should keep an eye out for some common pitfalls of encounter building.

- **Don't Make Every Encounter Complex:** There are many ways to make complex and dynamic encounters, but making every single encounter complex will become exhausting for you and your players. Some encounters should be simple, both because it will make the world feel more real and because it's a good way for the group to relax without as much to keep track of.
- **Avoid Flat Difficulty:** Ensure that not too many of your encounters fall at the same threat level. Having some low- and even trivial-threat battles adds variety, and it's great to throw in a few severe encounters beyond just bosses.
- **Beware of Unexpected Difficulty:** You might end up with creatures that have abilities that fit well together, making them extremely powerful as a combo, or that are particularly well-suited against your PCs. Compare the creatures and what you know about your PCs in advance, especially if the encounter is already a severe threat by the numbers. Page 26 has suggestions for what to do if you find a spike in difficulty during an encounter rather than in advance.
- **Watch for Overpowered Terrain:** As noted under Budgeting for Terrain, some features of the environment can increase the danger drastically. Consider your creature and the environment, and see whether the creature has a massive advantage compared to PCs in that terrain, such as a flying monster that's immune to radiation and that fights with long-range Strikes in a highly radioactive environment. If your PCs are reliant on tech gear to fight at long ranges or get closer to flying enemies, you might want to adjust.

TIME PRESSURE

Time pressure adds an extra sense of urgency to any encounter and can be a great way to make an otherwise trivial- or low-threat encounter tactically engaging, satisfying, and memorable. After all, while low- and trivial-threat encounters have an incredibly low chance of defeating the PCs, the opposition can usually hold on long enough to make the PCs spend a few rounds to defeat them unless the PCs expend more resources than they

SOCIAL ENCOUNTER EXAMPLES

These are just a few challenges you might want to play out using social encounters.

- Broadcasting a slippery villain's deception on the infosphere
- Brokering peace between warring star systems
- Convincing a dragon to trade a vidgame from their horde
- Convincing a megacorporation to allow their employees to unionize
- Convincing a planet's leaders to defend against an invasion
- Convincing another team to help you win a cooking contest
- Ending a tense standoff where everyone's weapons are out
- Engineering a mech to impress the judges at an exhibit
- Getting a desperate bank robber to free a hostage
- Getting more infosphere followers than a rival idol
- Persuading a crime syndicate to trust a rival gang
- Petitioning for admittance to a magical university
- Proving someone's innocence in front of a judge
- Rousing a group of threatened protesters to hold the line
- Securing a major contract over a rival corporation
- Tricking a swindler into contradicting their past lies
- Turning a commander against their underhanded lieutenant
- Turning a smuggler away from a life of crime
- Urging a lawmaker to vote on a law that would hurt their constituents
- Winning a debate about a contentious topic in a chat room

normally would on such foes. Time pressure is often related to a secondary objective in the encounter, though it could be a countdown directly related to the encounter itself. For instance, if the midwife's ritual will cause a polymorphic wave to consume the station in 4 rounds, the heroes need to defeat the midwife before then!

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

One of the simplest and most exciting ways to create a dynamic encounter, even if the combat itself isn't so difficult, is to add a secondary objective beyond simply defeating foes. Perhaps the imperial troops are about to execute captives, and some of the PCs need to divert their efforts to avoid a massacre. Encounters with a parallel objective that requires PCs to take actions other than destroying foes can keep those foes around long enough to do interesting things without inflating their power level. It also gives PCs skilled in areas related to the side mission a chance to shine.

Sometimes a secondary objective might present a time limit, like if the PCs need to prevent evidence from being deleted, either by fighting quickly or by disconnecting or stealing the computer it's stored on. Another type of secondary objective relates to how the PCs engage in combat with the primary opposition. The PCs might need to use nonlethal attacks against security guards who mistakenly believe the PCs are criminals, or they might need to prevent security drones from retreating to alert others. Options like these highlight mobile characters like the operative. You could even create truly off-the-wall secondary objectives that require the PCs to lose the encounter in order to succeed. The PCs might need to put up a believable fight but retreat and let foes steal their urban cruiser in order to follow the foes back to their base. Secondary objectives are a great way to highlight different abilities in combat and make for a memorable encounter, but–like all of these tactics–they can become annoying if overused.

OPPONENT SYNERGY

Most encounters assume that the PCs' opponents work together to oppose the PCs, but when groups of foes have been collaborating and fighting together for a long time, they can develop additional strategies. Consider giving each member of these tightly knit teams a reaction triggered by their allies' abilities, or another benefit they gain based on their allies' actions. Just as a team of PCs learns how to position the solarian so they aren't in the way of the ranged fighters and minimize the harm they take from the soldier's Area Fire, NPCs can learn to complement each other's strategies and avoid interfering with each other. On the opposite end of the spectrum, opponents with poor coordination make the fight much easier for the PCs. Poor coordination between mindless creatures is common, and PCs can use clever tactics to run circles around these foes. When intelligent creatures accidentally (or deliberately) harm each other or pursue conflicting strategies, particularly if they engage in banter with each other as they fight, it can make for an amusing break in the typical rhythm of combat.

When taken to its extreme, synergy can represent the actions of a hive mind or a single massive creature. These synergistic components can be creatures, hazards, or both. For example, instead of representing a previously unseen Swarm entity the size of a warship as a single foe, you could represent each of its pincers as an individual opponent. Perhaps this bespoke Swarm creature can sacrifice actions it would otherwise use to crush PCs in its maw to use its pincers more freely. In this case, you could model a field of pincers as a complex hazard that mainly reacts to the PCs moving within it, but allow the Swarm's body to act with a few pincers directly.

MISDIRECTION

Sometimes, a bit of misdirection can add a lot of interest to an encounter, especially against offense-heavy groups. Rather than amping up the opposition to match the PCs' firepower and creating opponents whose own offenses are too powerful for the PCs' defenses, consider a little sleight of hand. For instance, a villain might have a hologram or disguised robotic double with just enough durability to take a few hits while the true villain is hiding nearby, ready to emerge and attack.

TREASURE BY ENCOUNTER

Level	Total Treasure per Level	Low	Moderate	Severe	Extreme	Extra Treasure
1	1,750 credits	130 credits	180 credits	260 credits	350 credits	350 credits
2	3,000 credits	230 credits	300 credits	450 credits	600 credits	600 credits
3	5,000 credits	380 credits	500 credits	750 credits	1,000 credits	1,000 credits
4	8,500 credits	650 credits	850 credits	1,300 credits	1,700 credits	1,700 credits
5	13,500 credits	1,000 credits	1,350 credits	2,000 credits	2,700 credits	2,700 credits
6	20,000 credits	1,500 credits	2,000 credits	3,000 credits	4,000 credits	4,000 credits
7	29,000 credits	2,200 credits	2,900 credits	4,400 credits	5,800 credits	5,800 credits
8	40,000 credits	3,000 credits	4,000 credits	6,000 credits	8,000 credits	8,000 credits
9	57,000 credits	4,300 credits	5,700 credits	8,600 credits	11,400 credits	11,400 credits
10	80,000 credits	6,000 credits	8,000 credits	12,000 credits	16,000 credits	16,000 credits
11	115,000 credits	8,650 credits	11,500 credits	17,250 credits	23,000 credits	23,000 credits
12	165,000 credits	12,500 credits	16,500 credits	24,750 credits	33,000 credits	33,000 credits
13	250,000 credits	18,750 credits	25,000 credits	37,500 credits	50,000 credits	50,000 credits
14	365,000 credits	27,500 credits	36,500 credits	55,000 credits	73,000 credits	73,000 credits
15	545,000 credits	41,000 credits	54,500 credits	82,000 credits	109,000 credits	109,000 credits
16	825,000 credits	62,000 credits	82,500 credits	124,000 credits	165,000 credits	165,000 credits
17	1,280,000 credits	96,000 credits	128,000 credits	192,000 credits	256,000 credits	256,000 credits
18	2,080,000 credits	156,000 credits	208,000 credits	312,000 credits	416,000 credits	416,000 credits
19	3,550,000 credits	266,000 credits	355,000 credits	532,500 credits	710,000 credits	710,000 credits
20	4,900,000 credits	368,000 credits	490,000 credits	735,000 credits	980,000 credits	980,000 credits

Illusion spells and holograms can allow a foe to attack from a safer position, and *possession* grants the foe a disposable body unless the PCs brought along *spirit blast* or similar magic. Sometimes you can even hide the villain in plain sight, or the villain dies the first time the PCs defeat them in combat. Some might escape, perhaps through teleportation, misdirection, or with other ploys. When a villain escapes and lives to fight the PCs again another day, it's good to have that foe learn from their past failures. In their next encounter with the PCs, give them additional minions, spells, or other defenses designed to counteract the strategies the PCs used against them previously. Even if the villain doesn't escape, they might have other tricks up their sleeves, such as rising again to oppose the PCs. They could well return later in the adventure—or they might come back immediately for a second battle, so long as there's a proper justification for doing so. For example, defeating an otherworldly villain's outer shell might reveal its terrible true form, or an evil witchwarper from another timeline might have a more powerful alternate self who already defeated the PCs once and is wise to their tricks the next time he faces them!

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Details on how to run a social encounter, and the differences between a social and combat encounter, appear on page 30. The setup for a social encounter tends to be less detailed. For the NPCs involved, you'll just need statistics for their social skills, Perception, and Will. These use the non-combat level of the creature (page 31), based on the creature's social skills, *not* its combat level. You determine the challenge of a social encounter based on this non-combat level.

You also need to decide the objective or consequences of the social encounter—what the PCs can achieve and what happens if they fail—and the form of the challenge. It might be an online debate, a private meeting with a powerful person, or some kind of contest. Just like with combat encounters, think about the environment, with a particular eye toward the other people around. Is there a moderator the PCs can sway? Are they in an expensive private room in the hottest nightclub or at a crowded coffee shop? Is the atmosphere oppressive? Hopeful?

You might find the PCs' goals end up being quite different from what you initially thought they would be. Fortunately, social encounters are adaptable. Thinking of their likely objective helps you construct the scene in your mind more easily but shouldn't limit you.

TREASURE BY ENCOUNTER

The standard rules count treasure over the course of a level, rather than dividing it up by encounter. If you need to select treasure for a single encounter, such as in a sandbox game, you can use the table above. It takes the treasure budget for each level and breaks that down per encounter based on the encounter threat, similar to how XP varies by threat. The final column shows extra treasure you should award if you build an entire level this way. Unlike the standard table, this doesn't include items by item level, as the value doesn't cleanly break down for most single encounters. It's recommended you still give out those permanent items, but you'll need to borrow from other encounters' treasure to account for their value. Include encounters against creatures without treasure to account for this.

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VARIANT RULES

While the rules presented in *Player Core* and the rest of this book are designed to give you and your group a baseline experience that's easy to learn and fun to play, sometimes you're looking for more customizable options. That's where variant rules come in: options to alter the game's rules to fit your needs. This section adds a collection of variant rules to your toolbox, often with additional options for how to use them.

The variant rules in this chapter include the following.

- **Automatic Bonus Progression** (page 83) presents a variant for playing the game without relying on runes and upgrades.
- **Free Archetype** (page 84) presents a method of character generation that adds an archetype to a character's advancement without requiring them to spend their standard class feats.
- **Level 0 Characters** (page 84) can play through the characters' adventures before they have character classes.
- **Proficiency without Level** (page 85) changes the math of the proficiency system to tell stories where being outnumbered by weaker foes remains a challenge and high-level characters are less superhuman.

CHOOSING VARIANT RULES

When you and your group are deciding which variant rules to use, think about the types of stories you want to tell together, including the genre, themes, and characters, to choose which variant rules might be the best fit.

If you're not sure about a variant rule, take a chance! Make sure everyone in your group understands that this is a trial run and that you might need to adjust or remove the variant rules later on if they're causing unexpected side effects or not working as you intended. When you're playing with variant rules, be sure to let any new players who join the group know about the variant rules your group has chosen. This helps them set their expectations, which is important for making sure there's a feeling of fairness among your players.

If your group is playing a game with themes that call for it, you might wind up combining multiple variant rules together, possibly applying several options at the same time. For instance, in a gritty, hard science fiction or survival-horror game, you might start the PCs as 0-level characters and alter the proficiency bonus progression to remove level at the same time. In general, the variant options in this

chapter are sufficiently self-contained, with explanations of how they change the game, that you should be able to combine them without trouble. When you design your own variant rules, be on the lookout for places where new rules might have unexpected overlapping effects on each other and the game.

AUTOMATIC BONUS PROGRESSION

This variant removes the item bonus to rolls and DCs usually provided by magic and higher-grade tech items (with the exception of armor's item bonus) and replaces it with a new kind of bonus—potency—to reflect a character's innate ability. In this variant, magic items, if they exist at all, can provide unique special abilities rather than numerical increases.

SPECIAL CLASS FEATURES

Every character automatically gains the class features on the Automatic Bonus Progression table.

AUTOMATIC BONUS PROGRESSION

Level	Benefits
1	–
2	Attack potency +1
3	Skill potency (one at +1)
4	Devastating attacks (two dice), upgrade slots (+1)
5	Defense potency +1
6	Skill potency (two at +1 each)
7	Perception potency +1
8	Saving throw potency +1
9	Skill potency (one at +2, one at +1)
10	Attack potency +2
11	Defense potency +2
12	Devastating attacks (three dice), upgrade slots (+2)
13	Perception potency +2; skill potency (two at +2 each, one at +1)
14	Saving throw potency +2
15	Skill potency (three at +2 each, one at +1)
16	Attack potency +3
17	Ability apex; skill potency (one at +3, two at +2 each, two at +1 each)
18	Defense potency +3
19	Devastating attacks (four dice), Perception potency +3, upgrade slots (+3)
20	Saving throw potency +3; skill potency (two at +3 each, two at +2 each, two at +1 each)

Attack Potency 2nd

Starting at 2nd level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to attack rolls with all weapons and unarmed attacks. This increases to +2 at 10th level, and +3 at 16th level.

Skill Potency 3rd

At 3rd level, choose a single skill. You gain a +1 potency bonus with that skill. At 6th level, choose a second skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 9th level, choose one of those skills and increase its potency bonus to +2. At 13th level, increase the potency bonus of your second skill to +2 and choose a third skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 15th level, increase the third skill's potency bonus to +2 and choose a fourth skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. At 17th level, choose one of your three skills with a +2 potency bonus to increase to +3, and choose a fifth skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. Finally, at 20th level, choose one of the two skills with a +2 potency bonus to increase to +3, choose one of the three skills at a +1 potency bonus to increase to +2, and choose one new skill to gain a +1 potency bonus. You can spend 1 week to retrain one of these assignments at any time.

Devastating Attacks 4th

At 4th level, your weapon and unarmed Strikes deal two damage dice instead of one. This increases to three at 12th level and to four at 19th level.

Upgrade Slots 4th

At 4th level, your armor and weapons each gain an additional upgrade slot. This increases at 12th and 19th level, for a total of two additional upgrade slots at 12th level and three additional upgrade slots at 19th level.

Defense Potency 5th

At 5th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to AC. At 11th level, this bonus increases to +2, and at 18th level, to +3.

Perception Potency 7th

At 7th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to Perception, increasing to +2 at level 13 and +3 at level 19.

Saving Throw Potency 8th

At 8th level, you gain a +1 potency bonus to saves, increasing to +2 at level 14 and +3 at level 20.

Attribute Apex 17th

At 17th level, choose one attribute score to either increase by 2 or increase to 18 (whichever grants the higher score).

ADJUSTING ITEMS AND TREASURE

With this variant, you can ignore as much of the Party Treasure by Level table on page 59 as you want, though you'll usually want to provide consistent currency. The main area your choice will impact is in spellcasting items, such as *spell gems* and *spell chips*.

If you're using Pathfinder weapons and runes in your game, remove all potency runes, *striking* runes, and *resilient* runes. Items that normally grant an item bonus to statistics or damage dice no longer do, other than the base item bonus to AC from armor. Apex items grant unique actions but don't increase attribute modifiers. You should continue to give out consumable items at roughly the rate on page 59.

FREE ARCHETYPE

Sometimes the story of your game calls for a group where everyone is a space pirate or an apprentice at a cosmonastery. The free archetype variant introduces a shared aspect to every character without taking away any of that character's existing choices.

BUILDING A CHARACTER

The only difference between a normal character and a free-archetype character is that the character receives an extra class feat at 2nd level and every even level thereafter that they can use only for archetype feats. You might restrict the free feats to those of a single archetype each character in the group has (for a shared backstory), those of archetypes fitting a certain theme (such as only ones from magical archetypes in a game set in a magic school), or entirely unrestricted if you just want a higher-powered game.

If the group all has the same archetype or draws from a limited list, you might want to ignore the free archetype's normal restriction of selecting a certain number of feats before taking a new archetype. That way a character can still pursue another archetype that also fits their character.

PLAYING WITH FREE ARCHETYPES

Free-archetype characters are a bit more versatile and powerful than normal, but usually not so much that they unbalance your game. However, due to the characters' increased access to archetype feats, you should place a limit on the number of feats that scale based on a character's number of archetype feats (mainly multiclass Resiliency feats). Allowing a character to benefit from a number of these feats equal to half their level is appropriate.



LEVEL 0 CHARACTERS

Before they were heroes, every PC came from somewhere, whether they poured coffee in a dusty, sun-scoured village like Chk Chk or performed in a busy spaceport like Dae. Sometimes, it can be a lot of fun to play a prequel game set years before the PCs' first adventure as heroes, or you might have an idea for a low-powered adventure. The rules below provide ways to build and use level 0 PCs.

BUILDING CHARACTERS

Building a level 0 character is similar to building a 1st-level character, but you stop after choosing your ancestry and background. A level 0 character still gets the four free attribute boosts from Step 6 of the normal character creation process, but not the class attribute boost.

Initial Proficiencies

A level 0 character is trained in Perception, all saving throws, unarmed attacks, unarmored defense, and one simple weapon of their choice. Additionally, they're trained in a number of skills equal to 2 + their Intelligence modifier. The proficiency bonus for a level 0 character works the same way as normal, but since the level is 0, the total proficiency bonus for being trained is +2.

Hit Points

A level 0 character adds their Constitution modifier to their ancestry Hit Points to determine their starting Hit Points.

Starting Money

A level 0 character starts with 50 credits for equipment.

Apprentice Option

If the story you want to tell is about characters who have started training to become a particular class, you can grant them a small number of additional abilities. An apprentice character is trained in the skill or skills specified for their chosen class (such as Athletics and Intimidation for a soldier) in addition to the skills they gain through their initial proficiencies. They also gain benefits based on the class.

Solarian: An apprentice solarian gains a solar flare, solar nimbus, or solar weapon (but not all three). They can only select one trait for their solar weapon and don't gain attunement, so they don't gain the additional benefits of being attuned.

Other Martial Class: An apprentice of another martial class (envoy, operative, and soldier, for example) is trained in light armor, all simple weapons, and one martial weapon listed in the class's initial proficiencies. If a martial class not listed here lacks light armor or martial weapon training, give it a different ability as well.

Spellcaster: An apprentice spellcaster is trained in the appropriate magic tradition and gains two cantrips from their class. A prepared caster can't change these cantrips each day.

GAMEPLAY

Combat can be especially dangerous for level 0 characters. For safety's sake, you might treat the characters as level –1 when

determining what combat encounters are appropriate. For skill checks, they can still accomplish tasks with a simple trained DC using their trained skills, but success is less certain. Since they have fewer skills, the party might not have anyone trained for a given task. If you're playing these characters for more than a few sessions, consider advancing them to 1st level using the fast advancement speed (800 XP). If your group wants a longer experience at level 0, start the group without the apprentice benefits, then level up to apprentice (gaining those benefits and the apprentice adjustments for their class), and then level up to 1st level.

TREASURE

As the characters start with 50 credits, their adventures up to 1st level should account for the rest of a 1st-level character's starting money. That means you'll distribute treasure worth 100 credits × the number of PCs, a large percentage of which should be in credits.

PROFICIENCY WITHOUT LEVEL

This variant removes a character's level from their proficiency bonus, scaling it differently for a style of game that's outside the norm. This is a significant change to the system. The proficiency rank progression in *Player Core* is designed for science-fantasy games where heroes rise from humble origins to legendary strength. For some games, this narrative arc doesn't fit. Such games are about hedging bets in an uncertain and gritty world, in which even the world's best soldier can't guarantee a win against a large group of moderately skilled mercenaries.

The initial implementation is fairly straightforward: the proficiency bonus just becomes +2 for trained, +4 for expert, +6 for master, and +8 for legendary. It's best to give an untrained character a –2 proficiency modifier instead of a +0 proficiency bonus.

Additionally, for creatures, hazards, magic items, and so on, reduce each statistic that would include a proficiency bonus by the level of the creature or other rules element. These statistics are typically modifiers and DCs for attacks, ACs, saving throws, Perception, skills, and spells.

Finally, decrease the skill DCs of most tasks. You can just subtract the level from the DC tables on page 53, or you can reference the Simple Skill DCs (No Level) table for a set of DCs that's easier to remember. The new DCs make it a little harder for high-level characters to succeed than it would be when using the default numbers, in keeping with the theme mentioned earlier. Combat outcomes will tend to flatten out, with critical successes and critical failures being less likely across the game. This is particularly notable in spells, where you're less likely to see the extreme effects of critical failures on saves.

SIMPLE SKILL DCS (NO LEVEL)

Rank	DC
Untrained	10
Trained	15
Expert	20
Master	25
Legendary	30

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Telling stories where a large group of low-level monsters can still be a significant threat to a high-level PC (and conversely, where a single higher-level monster is not much of a threat to a group of PCs) requires some significant shifts in encounter building, including shifts in the PCs' rewards.

Under the default math, two monsters of a certain level are roughly as challenging as a single monster 2 levels higher. However, with level removed from proficiency, this assumption is no longer true. The XP budget for creatures uses a different scale, as shown in the Creature XP (No Level) table. You'll still use the same XP budget for a given threat level as shown on the Encounter Budget table on page 75 (80 XP for a moderate-threat encounter, 120 for a severe-threat encounter, and so on).

CREATURE XP (NO LEVEL)

Creature's Level	XP
Party level – 7	9
Party level – 6	12
Party level – 5	14
Party level – 4	18
Party level – 3	21
Party level – 2	26
Party level – 1	32
Party level	40
Party level + 1	48
Party level + 2	60
Party level + 3	72
Party level + 4	90
Party level + 5	108
Party level + 6	135
Party level + 7	160

While the XP values in the Creature XP (No Level) table work well in most cases, sometimes they might not account for the effects of creatures' special abilities when facing a party of a drastically different level. For instance, a ghost mage could prove too much for 5th-level PCs with its incorporeality, flight, and high-rank spells, even though it's outnumbered.

ADJUSTING TREASURE

Items on standard creatures are chosen to avoid giving out too much treasure for the level at which PCs will typically fight them. However, using this variant, PCs might defeat a creature 5 levels higher than they are, or even more! Too many encounters with higher-level foes can wind up giving the PCs more treasure than you expected, or vice versa if they're fighting weaker foes that put up more of a fight but still have poor treasure. You can make periodic adjustments if the PCs' treasure drifts too far from expectations. Making it so they can't easily sell or buy magic items will mean it's harder for them to exploit treasure they gain. To sidestep the issue entirely, you can use automatic bonus progression (page 83).

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OTHER VARIANT RULES

- **Ancestry Paragon** (page 86) provides more ancestry feats to help further differentiate characters using Starfinder's diverse array of species.
- **Expanded Space Rules** (page 86) gives guidelines for adding additional rules when playing in zero gravity and a vacuum.
- **Galactic Hero Points** (page 87) provides a simple adjustment to make Hero Points more heroic.
- **Skill Paragon** (page 87) provides additional skill feats for a specific skill to help highlight the themes of the character and campaign.

ANCESTRY PARAGON

Many characters have some elements that connect them to their ancestry but identify more strongly with their class or unique personality. Sometimes, though, a character is the embodiment of their ancestry to the point that it's of equal importance to their class. For a game where an ancestral background is a major theme and such characters are the norm, your group might consider using the ancestry paragon variant.

BUILDING AN ANCESTRY PARAGON CHARACTER

When creating an ancestry paragon character, instead of starting with one ancestry feat and gaining another at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels, the character starts with two ancestry feats and gains another at every odd level thereafter (3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, and so on) for a total of 11 ancestry feats.

PLAYING WITH ANCESTRY PARAGON CHARACTERS

Ancestry paragon characters have more versatility and power than other characters, though their extra abilities are usually limited to themes the ancestry already was suited for. It's unlikely to affect the game balance of combat encounters, but it might make exploration and social challenges easier for the heroes.

EXPANDED SPACE RULES

This set of variant rules provides a more realistic approximation of some of the stranger phenomena concerning zero-gravity and vacuum environments. They're meant to supplement the existing rules, not replace them. You can apply any or all of them to your campaign, as each adds additional challenges and opportunities for memorable moments in space!

These rules add additional complications to an already logistically complex environment. Therefore, you should only use these variant rules if you plan on having multiple encounters in space. Make sure the first couple of encounters in zero gravity are simple in execution and trivial in difficulty so players can get used to the additional rules and understand them before you add additional complexities like creatures who use special abilities to exploit the environment.

DAMAGE IN SPACE

Many damage types and Strikes have peculiar interactions in space. Each of the following rules modify spells, Strikes, and effects that use the appropriate traits and damage types in a vacuum or zero-gravity environment.

Area Damage

Area damage causes characters to be pushed back while in zero gravity. Any untethered character who takes area damage is Pushed Off to 5 feet away from the furthest boundary of the area damage and begins floating away from the centermost source of the area damage. If using variant movement in space rules, such as conservation of momentum, the creature's Speed while floating is increased by the distance the creature moved due to the area damage. If the effect that caused area damage would already move the creature, such as a soldier using Shoving Shot, the creature gains a bonus to Speed for purposes of floating while untethered equal to the distance they were moved by the ability.

Ranged Attacks

While in a vacuum or zero gravity, ranged Strikes with bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing weapons double their range and only take a –1 penalty when used to Strike a target beyond the first range increment for each additional range increment beyond the first. If a creature is in a vacuum with zero gravity, ignore all penalties to the creature's ranged attacks and quadruple their weapon's range.

Energy Damage in a Vacuum

In a vacuum like space, there's no medium for energy transfer through conduction or convection. Cold, fire, and electricity spells or actions with the cold, fire, and electricity traits don't function in a vacuum. Ignore these rules if the spell or action targets an adjacent target, even if it uses a ranged attack roll. This rule can be especially oppressive and should be avoided if the PCs are reliant on these abilities, and you should feel free to exempt specific traits. Magical effects or weapons with magical upgrades bypass this effect—magic breaks normal physics!

Energy Damage in Zero Gravity

Without the upward flow of hot air, fire and cold effects travel differently in space than you'd expect in a terrestrial setting. Cold and fire spells and actions with the cold and fire trait that have an area, burst, cone, or line and don't have a duration have an increased area in this environment. Double the radius of a burst that normally has a radius of at least 10 feet. Cones become a burst with a radius equal to its length and a range of 5 feet (meaning it must be placed adjacent to the caster or originator), and lines follow the same rules but have a burst radius equal to half their length.

Persistent Damage in Space

Bleeding is especially dangerous in space due to a reduced volume of blood produced in space and spurting from lack of gravity. While in zero gravity, increase the DC of the flat check to see if a creature recovers from persistent bleeding to 17 (or 12

with appropriate help). While in a vacuum without environmental protections, increase the DC to 20 (or 15 with appropriate help).

Creatures become immune to persistent cold and fire damage while in a vacuum.

MOVEMENT IN SPACE

Most variant rules concerning movement in space modify the amount of distance you float each turn while untethered. Before deciding which of these rules you can use in your campaign, you should familiarize yourself with the rules for movement in zero gravity and the untethered condition found on page 441 of *Player Core*. Some equipment, feats, and spells related to the untethered condition won't be relevant when using these rules.

Conservation of Momentum

When a creature Pushes Off a floating creature or object in a zero-gravity environment, they also Push the creature or object, but each of them move at half Speed. If they use Push Off as a free action after a melee Strike that deals bludgeoning damage or a successful Shove, they both move at full Speed instead. A creature Pushed Off this way becomes untethered and can Grab an Edge if they float past something that can stop their movement and lose the untethered condition.

If an untethered creature or object was already moving in one direction and is Pushed Off in the same direction, add Speed to the distance they float at the end of their turns equal to the amount they moved Pushing Off. If the untethered creature was already moving toward a different but not opposite cardinal direction, add Speed equal to half the distance, and if the untethered creature was already moving in the opposite cardinal direction, instead reduce the amount of distance they float by the distance they moved Pushing Off.

Kickback

If an untethered creature Strikes with a tech weapon that uses ammunition or petrol while floating in zero gravity, they Push Off from the target of the attack 5 feet plus 5 feet for every damage die of the weapon. If using Auto-Fire or Area Fire, they're Pushed Off in the exact opposite direction as the center of the cone or burst. Spells that use Strikes or target all creatures in a cone or line and deal bludgeoning, fire, piercing, or slashing damage causes an untethered spellcaster to Push Off 5 feet for every damage die of the spell.

Standardized Velocity

Using this rule, all characters move 20 feet instead of their Speed each round while floating untethered. To add verisimilitude, limit which feats, spells, and conditions increase or decrease a creature's Speed while calculating how far you float while untethered, as those that affect your base land Speed wouldn't necessarily make a creature float faster in space.

GALACTIC HERO POINTS

Hero Points (*Player Core* 405) are a powerful resource that can change the course of a scene via a key reroll. However, sometimes the use of Hero Points can become underwhelming when the reroll result is worse than the initial result—it might even feel worse if the reroll result is the same result as the original roll! This simple variant rule is intended to make Hero Points more of a heroic resource in your campaign, allowing you to reroll low results into something better. Using this rule will increase the overall power of Hero Points and, like some other variant rules, is something you'll want to heavily consider the ramifications of before including in your game.

HEROIC REROLLS

When using this variant rule to reroll a d20 result using a Hero Point, if the result on the dice is less than a 10, increase the dice result to become a 10. This means that a result of a 9 would become a 10, a result of a 2 would become a 10, and a result of 17 would remain as 17.

SKILL PARAGON

Skill feats allow characters to gain thematic feats that can help them in exploration, downtime, and social interactions. But given the high stakes of encounter mode, many players feel pressured to select skill feats that improve their efficacy in combat at the expense of selecting feats that better represent their character's abilities. This can be especially frustrating if a character wants to specialize in a skill like Diplomacy or Piloting that includes skill feats that might only see use in one or two sessions.

BUILDING A SKILL PARAGON CHARACTER

When creating a skill paragon character, after selecting the character's class, choose a specific skill. The character becomes trained in it. If they were already trained in it, they become trained in another skill instead of their chosen skill. At 3rd, 7th, and 15th levels, they gain an additional skill increase they can apply only to their chosen skill. They automatically gain all common general skill feats that specifically requires proficiency in the chosen skill as a prerequisite as soon as they qualify for those feats. If they already gain one of those feats (such as from a background or heritage), they instead gain Assurance for the chosen skill or, if they already have Assurance for that skill, a related Lore skill.

Not all skills have the same number of feats, and some skill choices will end up granting more bonus feats than others. Characters with two or more fewer bonus Skill Paragon feats than any other character in the party gain their choice of the Additional Lore skill feat in a category related to their chosen skill, or the Assurance, Automatic Knowledge, or Experienced Professional skill feat in their chosen skill or a related Lore skill.

CAMPAIGN SPECIFIC SKILLS

You can limit the skills characters can select based on the nature of the campaign. For example, in a campaign where characters play as crew members of a starship, you can designate specific roles on the ship that use specific skills, like captain (Diplomacy), doctor (Medicine), engineer (Crafting), and pilot (Piloting). You can delay the benefits of the variant rule until after campaign roles are formally assigned, especially when using the variant rules in tandem with the Level 0 Character rules.

AFFLICTIONS

Wherever there's life in the universe, there are also insidious perils that threaten the health and well-being of living creatures. Some of these afflictions, including many diseases, are inherent to the natural world. Others—curses and engineered diseases being the most notorious—exist solely to cause harm to others.

Afflictions strike creatures with potent and often escalating results. This section presents a variety of curses and diseases for use in your game.

Depending on the tone of the campaign, the GM might want to roll secret saving throws for PCs affected by an affliction. This is particularly effective when the affliction is an element within a survival or horror game, or when it's part of a mystery.

CURSES

A curse is a manifestation of potent ill will. Curses typically have a single effect that takes place upon a failed saving throw and lasts a specified amount of time, or can be removed only by certain actions a character must perform or conditions they must meet. Rarely, curses will have stages; these follow the rules for afflictions.



Curses may come from a malicious action, such as a necrovite's Painful Mark or a spell from an otherworldly spellcaster. The guardians of an orbital tomb or of the remnants of a destroyed world might ward their charge with a curse as protection against scavengers. Gods may inflict curses on servants who have raised their ire. In some rare cases, a curse might manifest as a response to a terrible act, such as the wanton destruction of natural resources or a massacre. When using a curse in your game, assign the curse to an item, location, situation, or similar element. Then, decide on a trigger for the curse—such as a creature attempting to steal a unique datapad, destroy a work of art, or slay a specific creature. A curse can even be tied to a specific location, in which case it functions as a simple hazard. Once that trigger occurs, the curse affects the triggering creature or creatures. Each affected creature must attempt a saving throw against the curse; if they fail, they are subject to the effects specified in the curse's Effect entry.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION CURSE 2

CURSE | MAGICAL | MENTAL

This curse causes you to whittle away your time on social media, eventually becoming so exhausted that your downtime is consumed with browsing the infosphere.

Saving Throw DC 16 Will; **Effect** You must spend 4 hours every night browsing the infosphere before you can sleep to avoid becoming fatigued and can't gain any benefits from resting or long-term rest. You can still make your daily preparations.

WITHERING RETRIBUTION CURSE 3

CURSE | MAGICAL | WOOD

This curse often afflicts those who neglect a garden or houseplant without knowing the magical nature of their charge. Your body becomes as frail and sensitive as an exotic plant, requiring a strict regimen to survive.

Saving Throw DC 18 Fortitude; **Effect** You begin to wither as your skin becomes dry and flaky. If you don't drink water every 8 hours, you take 1d4 damage that can't be healed for each hour it takes you to quench your thirst. As long as you're thirsty, you take a –1 status penalty to saving throws against environmental effects. Each week, you can attempt a new saving throw against the curse.

PEACEBOND CURSE 4

CURSE MAGICAL

While originally developed to secure venues hosting ambassadors and other high-ranking diplomats, this curse is also used on violent criminals in some jurisdictions.

Saving Throw DC 19 Will; **Effect** Your attacks and the spells you cast gain the nonlethal trait. You can't cast spells or Strike if it would deal lethal damage or has the death or void trait.

ETERNAL FIZZINESS CURSE 5

CURSE MAGICAL WATER

A side effect of an eternally fizzy carbonated drink, this curse causes all foreign liquids to bubble out of control and makes it a challenge to stay hydrated.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Effect** Roll a DC 5 flat check each time you inject or ingest a liquid, including a pharmaceutical serum. If the check fails, the fluid fizzes out of your body without effect and can't be recovered.

MICROTRANSACTION HELL CURSE 5

CURSE MAGICAL TECH

Often inflicted by spiteful technomancers on developers who buy existing software and add fees for previously free features, this curse forces the target to pay to survive, draining their credits or putting them in sickening debt.

Saving Throw DC 20 Will; **Effect** Every day, you lose up to 25 credits, deducted from a credstick on your person. If you have no credits available, you begin accruing debt to the curse and become sickened 1 as long as you have this debt, and you can't reduce or lower this sickened value as long as the curse lasts. Increase the value of the sickened condition by 1 for every 25 credits you owe, up to sickened 3. You can't remove the sickened condition caused from this curse without removing the curse or paying off the debt.

BULLET MAGNET CURSE 6

CURSE MAGICAL MENTAL

This curse causes your body to generate a powerful magnetic field in the presence of high-kinetic projectiles.

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Effect** You take a –2 status penalty to AC and saving throws against attacks that use ferrous ammunition, such as bullets, crossbow bolts, and other projectiles. This doesn't apply to thrown weapons, but it does apply to weapons propelled by magic. You can attempt a new saving throw each time you touch a powerful electromagnet or enter a creature with a significant magnetic field, such as one generated by a ferrofluid ooze.

NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT CURSE 7

CURSE MAGICAL TECH

You sign a digital contract binding you to never reveal something written on the contract, which can be as specific as a single word or as vague as the details of a corporation's procedures so long as you're employed by them.

Saving Throw DC 23 Will; **Effect** You can't violate the terms of your *nondisclosure agreement*. Once per hour, you can attempt a new saving throw against the curse, but breaking your *nondisclosure agreement* this way sends a notification to everyone who signed the contract with audio and video evidence of your violation. Other curses can be intertwined with this curse, and their effects can trigger if you violate the agreement.

GREMLIN'S TOUCH CURSE 9

CURSE MAGICAL PRIMAL

This curse causes technology to fail even if you press the same buttons as everyone else, whether it's the next generation of advanced supercomputer or a mere toaster oven.

Saving Throw DC 26 Will; **Effect** The first time each day you attempt to use a tech item other than an augmentation, that item gains glitching 1. The glitching condition applied by this curse only applies to you, but you can only end the condition by rolling a critical success on your flat check.

MAGIC OVERLOAD CURSE 11

CURSE MAGICAL

This curse commonly affects ritualists who fail to cast a complex ritual. Their eyes glow with the same spell circles as the failed ritual, and their bodies begin leaking magical energy.

Saving Throw DC 28 Will; **Effect** Each time you cast a spell of the highest rank you can cast using a spell slot, you must attempt a DC 6 flat check. On a failure, you take 1d6 mental damage per rank of the spell unless you expend a spell slot of at least one level lower than the spell cast as a free action.

PREDESTINED ORGANIZATION CURSE 12

CURSE MAGICAL MENTAL TIME

This curse forces those under stress to see the web of fate laid out before them as different timelines showing the worst possible results of their actions flash before their eyes. Whether conscious or habitual, you've learned to lessen the impact of these dreadful visions by planning out your actions in advance.

Saving Throw DC 30 Will; **Effect** At the end of each of your turns in a non-trivial combat encounter, you must declare an action (minimum 1 action and maximum of 3 actions) that you could take (such as Cast a Spell, Stride, Strike, and so on). On your next turn, you must perform the declared action. For example, if you declared a Strike, then you must Strike an available target. If you can't complete the action, such as by not holding a weapon while being too far away to use an unarmed Strike, you still expend the actions as though you used them. You can roll a new saving throw against the curse each time you critically succeed at a check attempted as part of an action you didn't declare with this curse.

HITBOX HEX CURSE 13

CURSE MAGICAL TELEPORTATION

Developed to shield oneself from lethal blows, this curse causes your body to erratically phase around, inadvertently making you more vulnerable to danger that you'd otherwise avoid.

Saving Throw DC 31 Fortitude; **Effect** The first time each round any enemy misses you with an attack (but not critically misses) or you roll a critical success at a basic Reflex save, you still take the minimum possible damage.

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TRUST EXERCISE — CURSE 15

CURSE | MAGICAL | MENTAL

This curse causes you to trust everyone around you to do what they think is best for you—even those who want to take your life.

Saving Throw DC 32 Will; **Effect** You become off-guard and are a willing ally for the purposes of spells or abilities if a creature wishes for you to be treated as such. Attempt a DC 32 Will save each time you become the target of a hostile action. On a success, the effects of this curse no longer apply to you.

TELEPATHIC BROADCAST — CURSE 18

CURSE | MAGICAL | MENTAL | OCCULT

Your thoughts begin broadcasting to those around you, often resulting in a loss of self-control as intrusive thoughts become outwardly projected at inopportune times. This curse was felt by many communities across the Pact Worlds during the birth of the Newborn and tends to manifest around significant deposits of aucturnite ore.

Saving Throw DC 38 Will; **Effect** Everyone within 15 feet of you can hear your surface thoughts. If you can already communicate telepathically with creatures farther away than 15 feet, everyone within range of your telepathy or limited telepathy can hear your surface thoughts instead. You can't lie to creatures who can read your surface thoughts, and you take a –2 status penalty to Charisma-based checks as you begin to lose your sense of self under the effects of this curse.

OTHERWORLDLY MEMORIES — CURSE 19

CURSE | MAGICAL

You've absorbed the memories of your life in a parallel reality, the subtle differences between your two worlds causing you to recall information applicable only to your other self.

Saving Throw DC 39 Will; **Effect** Each time you attempt a Recall Knowledge check, you learn an additional piece of erroneous information about the subject from the other world that isn't applicable in this world.

HAUNTED SITE — CURSE, LEVEL VARIES

CURSE | MAGICAL

This curse manifests in areas rife with void energy, such as the site of a tragically failed lunar colony or the domain of a powerful necrovite.

Saving Throw Fortitude save, with a high spell DC for a monster of its level (page 126); **Effect** If you fail your Fortitude save, you take void damage equal to the limited use area damage for a monster of this curse's level (page 128) that can't be healed as long as you're in the cursed area. As long as you are damaged by this curse and remain in the area for longer than 10 minutes, bodies rise from the ground as corporeal undead and attack.

These undead are temporary and return to the ground if all living creatures damaged by the curse leave the cursed area. Ten minutes after the undead are defeated, any living creatures remaining in the cursed area must attempt another Fortitude saving throw against the curse as it unleashes another burst of void damage and new undead rise to attack. The curse can be removed by conducting a 10-minute burial rite for the undead by succeeding at a Religion or Society check with a DC using the level of the curse (page 53).

DISEASES

Exposure to disease can be a hazard, such as when PCs come into contact with a Stardust plague-ridden corpse. Such hazards grant XP as a simple hazard of the disease's level. When a disease gives a sickened condition that can't be reduced until it runs its course, that typically means the disease has symptoms such as difficulty swallowing, loss of appetite, or nausea that make eating and drinking difficult but not impossible. Despite the condition's prohibition on eating or drinking, a creature can slowly and carefully eat and drink as long as they aren't in an encounter.

TRANSMISSIBLE TINNITUS — DISEASE 0

DISEASE

Most infected victims assume the mild ringing of early-onset transmissible tinnitus is merely hearing damage from a loud battle, being too close to a noisy machine, or listening to music too loudly. But the tinnitus gets worse as the virus that causes the symptom spreads, eventually causing the patient to lose their hearing entirely. Isolating the patient in an anechoic chamber will stop the disease from spreading, but the absence of other noise coupled with the tinnitus will make it difficult for them to rest, and they'll become fatigued after the first day.

Saving Throw DC 13 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** –1 status penalty to Perception checks that involve sound and initiative rolls using Perception (1 day); **Stage 2** –2 status penalty to Perception checks that involve sound and initiative rolls using Perception (1 day); **Stage 3** Deafened (1 day)

RADIATION SICKNESS, MILD — DISEASE 1

DISEASE

Exposure to mild radiation damages cells and causes fatigue.

Saving Throw DC 17 Fortitude; **Onset** 4 hours; **Stage 1** 1d4 poison damage and sickened 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 1d6 poison damage and sickened 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 1d6 poison damage and sickened 3 (1 hour)

SHAKES — DISEASE 1

DISEASE

While originally thought to be a symptom of different diseases, this bacterial infection is incredibly common in spaceports around the Pact Worlds and sticks to surfaces long enough to spread despite the air-filters aboard most starships.

Saving Throw DC 14 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 1 and a –5-foot status penalty to Speed (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 2 and a –10-foot status penalty to Speed (1 day)

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RED ACHE — DISEASE 2

DISEASE

The awful aches and full-body rashes of this gastrointestinal disease can quickly spread through a starship that shares a single galley, leading some ships to eat in shifts to minimize the odds of an entire crew getting sick.

Saving Throw DC 16 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** sickened 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** sickened 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** sickened 3, and you take a –3 penalty to Charisma-based checks due to an alarming rash that lingers for 1 additional week after the disease is cured (1 day)

PETAL ROT — DISEASE 3

DISEASE | PRIMAL

While this disease originally caused plants to rot, a surge of primal magic empowered it to infect other creatures. The skin of the infected flakes away in a pattern vaguely resembling leaves while their insides rot. This disease gains the virulent trait while infecting a plant creature.

Saving Throw DC 17 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** 2d6 poison damage and enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage, enfeebled 2, and weakness 5 to fire (1 day); **Stage 3** 4d6 poison damage, enfeebled 2, and weakness 10 to fire (1 day)

MINDFIRE — DISEASE 4

DISEASE | MENTAL | OCCULT

This disease impairs a victim's ability to reject or otherwise forget about intrusive thoughts. The memories and ideas build until the infected becomes unable to rationally process information, which can at times result in them lashing out in rage.

Saving Throw DC 19 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** stupefied 2 (1 day); **Stage 2** stupefied 2, and the first time each round you roll a Will saving throw or take mental damage, you must succeed at a Will save against the disease's DC or become confused for 1 round (1 day)

CACKLE FEVER — DISEASE 5

DISEASE

Often confused with a curse, this parasitic infection drives its victims to laugh uncontrollably.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** constant giggles give you a –1 status penalty to Hide or Sneak (1 day); **Stage 2** you must succeed at a DC 5 flat check to use auditory abilities, Hide, or Sneak (1 day); **Stage 3** before you regain actions at the start of each turn in an encounter, you must succeed at a DC 5 flat check or become slowed 1 and lose the ability to use auditory abilities, Hide, or Sneak (1 day)

RADIATION SICKNESS, SEVERE — DISEASE 5

DISEASE

Exposure to severe radiation causes fatigue and nausea.

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Onset** 4 hours; **Stage 1** 2d6 poison damage and sickened 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and sickened 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 2d8 poison damage and sickened 3 (1 hour)

DEVIL CHILL — DISEASE 6

DISEASE | DIVINE

Originating in devils, no one is certain whether this disease resulted from diabolic biohacking or if it mutated in the body of a devil. Devil chill can affect fiends and celestials even if they're immune to disease, but fiends will never progress beyond stage 1, and the disease gains the virulent trait while infecting a celestial creature.

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** carrier with no effects (1 day); **Stage 2** 2d6 cold damage and clumsy 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** 2d6 cold damage, clumsy 3, and weakness 10 to cold (1 day); **Stage 4** 2d6 cold damage, paralyzed, and weakness 15 to cold; **Stage 4** death

BONE BLIGHT — DISEASE 8

DISEASE | VIRULENT

This disease melts the bones of whoever it afflicts. Bone blight can affect corporeal undead with skeletons even if they're immune to disease, but creatures without skeletons don't progress past stage 1.

Saving Throw DC 25 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** carrier with no effects (1 day); **Stage 2** clumsy 1, drained 1, and enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** clumsy 2, drained 2, and enfeebled 2; **Stage 4** drained 2 and paralyzed; **Stage 4** death

RADIATION SICKNESS, EXTREME — DISEASE 10

DISEASE

Exposure to extreme radiation causes burns, hair loss, nausea, and potentially death without prompt treatment.

Saving Throw DC 27 Fortitude; **Onset** 2 hours; **Stage 1** 3d8 poison damage and sickened 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 4d8 poison damage and sickened 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 5d8 poison damage and sickened 3 (1 hour); **Stage 4** death

STARDUST PLAGUE — DISEASE 11

DISEASE | VIRULENT

While relatively rare in the modern era, this disease killed millions across the Pact Worlds soon after the advent of Drift travel.

Saving Throw DC 29 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** 1d6 bleed damage and 1d6 void damage (1 day); **Stage 2** 1d6 void damage, fatigued, and take 1d6 persistent bleed damage every hour (1 day); **Stage 3** 2d6 void damage, fatigued, and take 2d6 persistent bleed damage every hour, and whenever you take bleed or void damage, you must succeed at a Will save against the disease's DC or become confused for 1 round (1 day); **Stage 4** 3d6 void damage, unconscious, and take 3d6 persistent bleed damage every hour

RADIATION SICKNESS, INCREDIBLE — DISEASE 15

DISEASE

Exposure to incredible radiation causes severe burns, severe nausea, and death without prompt treatment.

Saving Throw DC 32 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** 10d6 poison damage and sickened 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 11d6 poison damage and sickened 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 12d6 poison damage and sickened 3 (1 hour); **Stage 4** death

ENVIRONMENT

Primarily used during exploration, environment rules bring the locales your party travels through to life. You'll often be able to use common sense to adjudicate how environments work, but you'll need special rules for environments that really stand out.

Each of the environments presented in this section uses the terrain rules (*Player Core* 415) in different ways, so be sure to familiarize yourself with those rules before reading this section. Some environments refer to the rules for climate (page 97) and natural disasters (beginning on page 99). Many places have the traits of multiple environments; a snow-covered mountain might use both the arctic and mountain environments, for example. For environmental features with effects based on how tall or deep they are, those effects vary further based on a creature's size. For instance, a shallow bog for a Medium creature might be a deep bog for smaller creatures, and a deep bog for a Medium creature could be only a shallow bog for a larger creature (and so insignificant for a truly massive creature that it isn't even difficult terrain).

The Environmental Features table (see below) lists the features of various environments alphabetically for quick reference. The Proficiency DC Band entry indicates a range of appropriate simple DCs for that environmental feature while also providing a rough estimate of the danger or complexity of the feature.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Some environmental features or natural disasters deal damage. Because the amount of damage can vary based on the specific circumstances, the rules for specific environments and natural disasters use damage categories to describe the damage, rather than exact numbers. Use the Environmental Damage table to determine damage from an environment or natural disaster. When deciding the exact damage amount, use your best judgment based on how extreme you deem the danger to be.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Category	Damage
Minor	1d6–2d6
Moderate	4d6–6d6
Major	8d6–12d6
Massive	18d6–24d6

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Feature	Pages	Proficiency DC Band
Acid Rain	99	Untrained–trained
Airlocks	94	Untrained–trained
Atmosphere	97	–
Avalanches	99	Expert–legendary
Blizzards	100	–
Bogs	94	Untrained–trained
Catwalks	94	Untrained–trained
Canopies	93	Trained–master
Chasms	93	–
Collapses	100	Expert–legendary
Cosmic Radiation	96	Expert–legendary
Crowd	94	Trained–master
Currents	93	Trained–master
Decompression	97	Untrained–expert
Doors	95	–
Earthquakes	100	Trained–legendary
Elevators	95	–
Floods	100	Expert–legendary
Floors	95	Untrained–expert
Fog	97	–
Gravity	98	–
Gravity Wells	100	Trained–master
Ice	93	Trained–master
Lava	101	Expert–legendary
Magnetic Storm	100	Trained–master
Maintenance Tunnels	95	Untrained–expert
Precipitation	98	–
Psystorms	100	Expert–legendary
Radiation	99	–
Rooftops	95	Trained–master
Rubble	93	Untrained–expert
Sand	93	Untrained–expert
Sandstorms	100	Trained–master
Security	95	–
Sewers	95	–
Slopes	94	Untrained–trained
Snow	93	Untrained–expert
Stairs	96	Untrained–trained
Streets	96	Untrained–trained
Temperature	98	–
Tornadoes	100	Master–legendary
Trees	93	Untrained–master

Feature	Pages	Proficiency DC Band
Tsunamis	100	Master–legendary
Underwater Visibility	93	–
Vacuum	96	Untrained–trained
Volcanic Eruptions	100	Trained–legendary
Vortex	101	Expert–legendary
Walls	96	See page 97
Wildfires	101	Expert–legendary
Wind	98	Untrained–legendary

AQUATIC

Aquatic environments are among the most challenging for PCs short of other worlds and unusual planes. PCs in an aquatic environment need a way to breathe (typically a *water breathing* spell) and must usually Swim to move, though a PC who sinks to the bottom can walk awkwardly, using the rules for greater difficult terrain. Characters in aquatic environments make frequent use of the rules for aquatic combat (page 30, *Player Core* 429) and the drowning and suffocation rules (*Player Core* 429).

CURRENTS AND FLOWING WATER

Ocean currents, flowing rivers, and similar moving water are difficult terrain or greater difficult terrain (depending on the speed of the water) for a creature Swimming against the current. At the end of a creature's turn, it moves a certain distance depending on the current's speed. For instance, a 10-foot current moves a creature 10 feet in the current's direction at the end of that creature's turn.

UNDERWATER VISIBILITY

It's much harder to see things at a distance underwater than it is on land, and it's particularly difficult if the water is murky or full of particles. In pure water, the maximum visual range is roughly 240 feet to see a small object, and in murky water, visibility can be reduced to only 10 feet or even less.

ARCTIC

The main challenge in an arctic environment is the extreme low temperature, but arctic environments also contain ice and snow. The disasters that most often strike in arctic environments are avalanches, blizzards, and floods.

ICE

Icy ground is both uneven ground and difficult terrain, as characters slip and slide due to poor traction.

SNOW

Depending on the depth of snow and its composition, most snowy ground is either difficult terrain or greater difficult terrain. In denser snow, characters can attempt to walk along the surface without breaking through, but some areas might be loose or soft enough that they're uneven ground.

DESERT

Desert encompasses sandy and rocky deserts as well as badlands. Though tundra is technically a desert, it's classified as arctic, as the climate is the primary challenge in such areas. Sandy deserts often have quicksand and sandstorms.

RUBBLE

Rocky deserts are strewn with rubble, which is difficult terrain. Rubble dense enough to be walked over rather than navigated through is uneven ground.

SAND

Packed sand doesn't usually significantly impede a character's movement, but loose sand is either difficult terrain (if it's shallow) or uneven ground (if it's deep). The wind often shifts sand into dunes, hills of loose sand with uneven ground facing the wind and steeper inclines away from the wind.

FOREST

These diverse environments include jungles and other wooded areas. They're sometimes struck by wildfires.

CANOPIES

Particularly dense forests, such as rainforests, have a canopy level above the ground. A creature trying to reach the canopy or travel along it must Climb. Swinging on vines and branches usually requires an Acrobatics or Athletics check. A canopy provides cover, and a thicker one can prevent creatures in the canopy from seeing those on the ground, and vice versa.

TREES

While trees are omnipresent in a forest, they typically don't provide cover unless a character uses the Take Cover action. Only larger trees that take up an entire 5-foot square on the map (or more) are big enough to provide cover automatically.

MOUNTAIN

Mountain environments also include hills. The most common disasters here are avalanches.

CHASMS

Chasms are natural pits, typically at least 20 feet long and clearly visible (barring mundane or magical efforts to conceal them). The main danger posed by a chasm is that characters must Long Jump to get across. Alternatively, characters can take the safer but slower route of Climbing down the near side of the chasm and then ascending the far side to get across.

RUBBLE

Mountains often have extremely rocky areas or shifting, gravelly scree that makes for difficult terrain. Especially deep or pervasive rubble is uneven ground.

TERRAIN RULES

Environments make frequent use of the rules for difficult terrain, greater difficult terrain, and hazardous terrain, so those rules are summarized here.

Difficult terrain is any terrain that impedes movement, ranging from particularly rough or unstable surfaces to thick ground cover and countless other impediments. Moving into a square of difficult terrain (or moving 5 feet into or within an area of difficult terrain, if you're not using a grid) costs an extra 5 feet of movement. Moving into a square of **greater difficult terrain** instead costs 10 additional feet of movement. This additional cost isn't increased when moving diagonally. Creatures can't normally Step into difficult terrain.

Any movement creatures make while jumping ignores terrain that the creature is jumping over. Some abilities (such as flight or being incorporeal) allow creatures to avoid the movement reduction from some types of difficult terrain. Certain other abilities let creatures ignore difficult terrain while traveling on foot; such an ability also allows a creature to move through greater difficult terrain using the movement cost for difficult terrain, but unless the ability specifies otherwise, these abilities don't let creatures ignore greater difficult terrain.

Hazardous terrain damages creatures whenever they move through it. For instance, an acid pool, a corridor filled with molten slag, and a field of razor-sharp grass all constitute hazardous terrain. The amount and type of damage depend on the specific hazardous terrain.

SLOPES

Slopes vary from the gentle rises of normal terrain to difficult terrain and inclines, depending on the angle of elevation. Moving down a slope is typically normal terrain, but characters might need to Climb up particularly steep slopes.

SWAMP

Wetlands are the most common kind of swamp, but this category also includes drier marshes such as moors. Swamps often contain quicksand. Despite their soggy nature, swamps aren't likely to experience flooding since they act as natural sponges and absorb a great deal of water before they flood.

BOGS

Also called mires, bogs are watery areas that accumulate peat, are covered by shrubs and moss, and sometimes feature floating islands of vegetation covering deeper pools. Shallow bogs are difficult terrain for a Medium creature, and deep bogs are greater difficult terrain. If a bog is deep enough that a creature can't reach the bottom, the creature has to Swim. Bogs are also acidic, so particularly extreme or magical bogs can be hazardous terrain.

UNDERGROUND

Underground environments consist of caves and natural subterranean areas. Artificial dungeons and ruins combine underground features with urban features like stairs and walls. Deep underground vaults have some of the same terrain features as mountains, such as chasms and cliffs. The most common disasters underground are collapses.

URBAN

Urban environments include open city spaces and buildings as well as the interiors of constructed environments and structures, including climate-controlled satellite cities, orbital stations, and starship interiors. The building information in this section also applies to ruins and constructed dungeons. Depending on their construction and location, cities might be vulnerable to many sorts of disasters, especially fires and floods, while the interior of starships and space stations are more likely to be vulnerable to decompression and power outages.

AIRLOCKS

Airlocks seal the climate-controlled environment inside a satellite or starship from the vacuum outside. Airlocks are also found within terrestrial facilities to keep breathable air in and contaminants or dangerous atmospheres out. A typical airlock consists of two interlocked doors with an interior compartment.

CATWALKS

Catwalks are walkways that cross over maintenance tunnels and warehouses or run alongside wider corridors. Catwalks are equipped with ladders or ramps to ascend and descend easily, and most have railings to prevent accidental falls. Moving from the ground to a catwalk without the use of a ladder likely requires Climbing, a High Jump, or a Leap followed by Grabbing an Edge and Climbing up.

Wide catwalks are easy to move across and commonly appear in warehouses, engineering bays, and other large spaces. Narrow catwalks are common in starship interiors and other places where spaces are cramped, and they're difficult terrain. Unstable catwalks and narrow catwalks that lack railings likely require creatures to Balance to cross safely. Creatures that fall off or are pushed off a catwalk take falling damage.

Characters on a catwalk can usually Take Cover. Depending on the catwalk's construction material and rails, as well as the positioning of creatures, catwalks could provide cover automatically.

CROWDS

Crowded thoroughfares and similar areas are difficult terrain, or greater difficult terrain if an area is truly packed with people. You might allow a character to get a crowd to part using Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance.

A crowd exposed to an obvious danger, like a fire or a rampaging monster, attempts to move away from the danger

as quickly as possible, but it's slowed by its own mass. A fleeing crowd typically moves at the Speed of an average member each round (usually 25 feet), potentially trampling or leaving behind slower-moving members of the crowd.

DOORS

Opening an unlocked door requires an Interact action (or more than one for a particularly complicated or large door). Stuck doors must be Forced Open, and locked ones require a character to Pick the Lock or Force them Open.

Automatic doors don't require an Interact action to open and instead operate based on proximity. Many automatic doors have control panels and are keyed to a security feature, such as an ID card or retinal scan. Such security features can usually be bypassed using Disable a Device.

ELEVATORS

Elevators are common in space stations, large starships, and buildings. Typically an enclosed chamber or flat platform, elevators move up and down a vertical shaft via technology or magic at the push of a button or other simple command. Because a single elevator traverses each elevator shaft, creatures can hail an elevator with an Interact action but often must wait for the elevator to arrive. Depending on how large or busy a building is, creatures could have to wait up to a minute or two. Once aboard, a creature can select their destination floor with an Interact action.

Prying open the door to an elevator shaft when the elevator isn't present or opening the ceiling hatch in an elevator car often requires 2 or more Interact actions to open. Often, the doors must be Forced Open or the hatch must be unlocked using Disable Device or Pick a Lock. Elevator shafts are equipped with ladders to ascend or descend. Creatures in an elevator shaft run the risk of falling or being crushed by an elevator car.

FLOORS

Constructed floors of all varieties are easy to walk on. Damaged and very old floors often contain areas of uneven ground.

MAINTENANCE TUNNELS

Maintenance tunnels are generally located below floors or inside the walls of large constructed structures and starships. Maintenance tunnels can be entered through narrow shafts, usually covered by panels or grates, that require 2 or more Interact actions to open. Most maintenance tunnels are crowded with machinery and are difficult terrain. Some are tight spaces that require Medium and larger characters to Squeeze.

ROOFTOPS

Rooftops make for memorable ambushes, chase scenes, infiltrations, and running fights. Flat roofs are easy to move across, but they're rare in any settlement that receives significant snowfall since heavy buildups of snow can collapse a roof. Angled roofs are uneven ground, or inclines if they're especially steep. The peak of an angled roof is a narrow surface.

Hurdling from roof to roof often requires a Long Jump, though some buildings are close enough to Leap between. A High Jump might be necessary to reach a higher roof, or a Leap followed by Grabbing an Edge and Climbing up.

SECURITY

Across the galaxy, countless nations, planets, and galactic governments are protected by military forces. Most settlements have peacekeeping or law enforcement agencies whose agents and officers work in shifts to protect the settlement at all hours. These agencies are often based out of dedicated buildings and have financial and infrastructural support from the government. Many buildings, structures, and regions are patrolled by private security firms and mercenary forces.

Most buildings, structures, and space stations have security measures, typically including surveillance cameras or observation drones. Security guards often monitor these surveillance systems in designated rooms or buildings, or authorize remotely controlled drones or robots to defend a facility. Traps such as sentry turrets (page 112), laser turrets (page 111), and laser webs (page 106) are also common security features.



SEWERS

Sewers are generally 10 feet or more below street level and are equipped with ladders or other means to ascend and descend. Raised paths along the walls allow sewer workers access, while channels in the center carry the waste itself. Less sophisticated sewers, or sections those workers don't usually access, might require wading through disease-ridden waste. Sewers can be accessed through sewer grates, which usually require 2 or more Interact actions to open.

Sewer Gas

Sewer gas often contains pockets of highly flammable gas. A pocket of sewer gas exposed to a flame

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CITIES IN STARFINDER

Urban environments exist inside the hulls of enormous starships, deep within underground asteroid tunnels, or on the surface of countless planets. A city's architecture and materials vary depending on where it was built. Most Pact Worlds cities incorporate modern materials like concrete, steel, and transparent aluminum. Settlements built where resources are scarce, like on Akiton or Daimalko, might feature shelters made of recycled materials like plastic and scrap metal. Worlds with less technological advancement often build cities out of masonry, stone, and wood.

explodes, dealing moderate environmental fire damage to creatures in the area.

STAIRS

Stairs are difficult terrain for characters moving up them, and shoddy stairs might also be uneven ground. Stairs designed for larger creatures are greater difficult terrain both up and down when used by significantly smaller creatures, or might require them to Climb on every step.

STREETS

Most settlements have streets that were largely established organically as the settlement grew. These roads vary from alleys as narrow as 5 feet to massive multilane highways over 100 feet wide. Most basic streets are 30 feet wide and divided into two lanes. Streets are generally paved with concrete. If the roads are in poor repair, they could be difficult terrain or uneven ground.

Street signs and lights direct traffic along roads, streetlamps cast light along their length, and sidewalks flank both sides of the street for pedestrians. Intersections, crosswalks, corridors, underground tunnels, and raised platforms enable pedestrians to cross thoroughfares safely. Breaking traffic laws is likely to draw the attention of local law enforcement and increases the threat of vehicular accidents.

WALLS

Well-built structures have exterior walls of steel, concrete, brick, or stonemasonry. Smaller, lower-quality, or temporary structures might have wooden or plastic walls. Interior walls tend to be less sturdy; they could be made of wooden planks, or even simply of thick, opaque paper held in a wooden frame. An underground structure might have thick walls carved out of solid rock to prevent the weight of the ground above from collapsing the structure. Rules for climbing and breaking walls are in the sidebar on page 97.

WEIRD

Weird environments are unpredictable and erratic. Weird environments are often found on irregular planets or places scarred by powerful magic or other strange phenomena. A weird environment might be a patchwork of disparate ecosystems, with a lava field inexplicably bordering arctic tundra, or a bizarre biome such as a shallow, luminescent sea afloat with psychic jellyfish exhaling their emotions in jets of color and sensation. Psystorms and radiation are examples of threats that might be encountered in weird environments.

OUTER SPACE

Outer space holds countless stars, planets, and other cosmic bodies. Most characters will venture into space during their adventuring career. Shuttling between planets, visiting an orbiting space station, or traveling to a distant star system are examples of common travel that require a journey through outer space. Most travelers embark on such trips aboard a starship, which protects them from outer space's environmental dangers.

COSMIC RADIATION

Stars and other powerful cosmic bodies are radioactive. Most habitable planets have atmospheres that repel their emissions, allowing only a negligible amount of cosmic radiation in occasional bursts. Usually, creatures on a planet with no atmosphere are constantly exposed to mild to severe radiation.

DRIFT BEACONS

Drift beacons are satellites tethered to the Drift, the plane used for rapid interstellar transportation by many civilizations across the galaxy. Drift beacons act as landmarks for Drift travel and relay long-range communications through outer space. Most Drift beacons are artificially constructed and maintained by the Church of Triune, but their designs can vary significantly, ranging from simple industrial buoys to extradimensional pagodas.

SOLAR FLARES

Sometimes a star releases bursts of intense energy that are visible as flares of roiling plasma arcing out from its surface. Creatures and objects on or near a star's surface take massive fire damage and major persistent electrical damage from a solar flare. Solar flares disrupt technology up to millions of miles away from the star. A solar flare causes electronics and radio communications to gain the glitching condition or stop working for up to 1d6 hours.

VACUUM

Space is a vacuum, meaning it contains no breathable air and has zero gravity (page 99). Creatures in a vacuum are at risk of suffocation (*Player Core* 429) and take minor bludgeoning damage each minute. In addition, they are untethered and require special propulsion to move. Space has no effective temperature, and a creature retains its body heat for several hours in a vacuum. Sound doesn't travel in a vacuum, meaning most sonic effects don't function. Creatures with the cosmic trait are immune to many of the effects of a vacuum.

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Decompression

Decompression occurs when a creature suddenly transitions from a pressurized environment to a vacuum, such as by getting shoved out of an airlock or being inside a starship that sustains heavy damage. Such a creature takes moderate bludgeoning damage and immediately begins suffocating (they can't hold their breath). Decompression can also apply to characters in underwater environments.

Atmosphere

An atmosphere is a layer of gases held in place by a planet's gravity. There are various types, and some are hazardous.

Normal Atmosphere

This atmosphere is made up of gases such as oxygen and nitrogen that most creatures can safely breathe. Planets with normal atmospheres have weather patterns that vary depending on climate. Planets such as Castrovel and Verces have normal atmospheres. Artificial atmospheres, like the one on Absalom Station, are usually normal.

Corrosive Atmosphere

A corrosive atmosphere is made of caustic gases and creates dangerous weather patterns, such as acid rain. A corrosive atmosphere deals minor to moderate acid damage per minute to creatures and objects. Certain metals, stones, and treated materials might resist a specific type of corrosive atmosphere.

Thick Atmosphere

A thick atmosphere has high air pressure. Breathing a thick atmosphere usually requires characters to attempt a Fortitude save every hour to avoid becoming sickened until they begin breathing normal air. The value of the sickened condition depends on the specific atmosphere (typically sickened 1).

Thin Atmosphere

A thin atmosphere has low air pressure and often lacks enough oxygen to keep characters healthy. Breathing a thin atmosphere for more than a few hours causes non-acclimated characters to become fatigued. Severely thin atmospheres require characters to attempt a Fortitude save every hour or become drained. The value of the drained condition depends on the specific atmosphere (typically drained 1).

Toxic Atmosphere

A toxic atmosphere contains gases that are poisonous to most creatures. Breathing a toxic atmosphere typically deals minor poison damage per minute.

Climate

Weather is more than just set dressing to establish mood–it has mechanical effects you can combine with environmental components to create a more memorable encounter. Weather can impose circumstance penalties on certain checks, from –1 to –4 based on severity.

Doors and Walls

Some of the most common obstacles that characters face in urban areas and dungeons are doors and walls.

Climbing

The table below gives the typical DC for Athletics checks to Climb a structure, which is usually a simple DC. You might adjust the difficulty based on the specifics of the structure and environment.

Demolishing

A character might want to smash their way through a door, a window, or certain walls. The Hardness, Hit Point, and Broken Threshold values provided in the table below are based on the material the structure is typically made of, so a door made of steel, for example, has a higher Hardness than one of wood. For more on damaging objects, see page 236 of *Player Core*.

Strong walls, such as well-maintained concrete or steel, can't be broken without dedicated work and proper tools. Getting through such walls requires downtime.

Door	Climb DC	Hardness, HP (BT)
Plastic	15	5, 35 (17)
Wood	20	10, 40 (20)
Concrete	30	14, 56 (28)
Transparent aluminum	20	18, 72 (36)
Steel	30	18, 72 (36)
Airlock	40	22, 78 (39)

Wall	Climb DC	Hardness, HP (BT)
Plastic	15	5, 35 (17)
Wood	15	10, 40 (20)
Masonry	20	14, 56 (28)
Concrete	30	14, 56 (28)
Transparent aluminum	30	18, 72 (36)
Steel	40	18, 72 (36)
Nanocarbon	40	20, 74 (37)
Starship interior	20	22, 78 (39)

Fence	Climb DC	Hardness, HP (BT)
Wood	10	10, 40 (20)
Metal	10	18, 72 (36)

Fog

Fog imposes a circumstance penalty to visual Perception checks, depending on the thickness; it causes creatures viewed through significant amounts of fog to be concealed; and it cuts off all visibility at half a mile or less–possibly much less. Conditions limiting visibility to about a mile are called mist, and those that do so to about 3 miles are called haze.

FORCING OPEN

Structures that can be opened—such as doors, gates, and windows—can be Forced Open using Athletics. This is usually necessary only if they're locked or stuck. The DC to Force Open a structure uses the Thievery DC of its lock but adjusts it to be very hard (increasing the DC by 5). If there's no lock, use the following table.

Structure	Force Open DC
Stuck door or window	15
Exceptionally stuck	20
Lift hydraulic door	30
Bend metal bars	30

PRECIPITATION

Precipitation includes rain as well as colder snow, sleet, and hail. Wet precipitation douses flames, and frozen precipitation can create areas of snow or ice on the ground. Drizzle or light snowfall has little mechanical effect beyond limited visibility.

Visibility

Most forms of precipitation impose circumstance penalties on visual Perception checks. Hail often is sparser but loud, instead penalizing auditory Perception checks. Especially heavy precipitation, such as a downpour of rain or heavy snow, might make creatures concealed if they're far away.

Fatigue

Precipitation causes discomfort and fatigue. Anything heavier than drizzle or light snowfall reduces the time it takes for characters to become fatigued from overland travel to only 4 hours. Heavy precipitation can be dangerous in cold environments when characters go without protection. Soaked characters treat the temperature as one step colder (mild to severe, severe to extreme; see Temperature below).

Thunderstorms

High winds and heavy precipitation accompany many thunderstorms. There's also a very small chance that a character might be struck by lightning during a storm. A lightning strike usually deals moderate electricity damage, or major electricity damage in a severe thunderstorm.

TEMPERATURE

Often, temperature doesn't impose enough of a mechanical effect to worry about beyond describing the clothing the characters need to wear to be comfortable. Particularly hot and cold weather can make creatures fatigued more quickly during overland travel and can cause damage if harsh enough, as shown in the Temperature Effects table below.

Appropriate cold-weather gear can negate the damage from severe cold or reduce the damage from extreme cold to that of particularly severe cold.

TEMPERATURE EFFECTS

Category	Temperature	Fatigue	Damage
Incredible cold	–80°F or colder	2 hours	Moderate cold every minute
Extreme cold	–79°F to –20°F	4 hours	Minor cold every 10 minutes
Severe cold	–21°F to 12°F	4 hours	Minor cold every hour
Mild cold	13°F to 32°F	4 hours	None
Normal	33°F to 94°F	8 hours	None
Mild heat	95°F* to 104°F*	4 hours	None
Severe heat	105°F* to 114°F	4 hours	Minor fire every hour
Extreme heat	115°F to 139°F	4 hours	Minor fire every 10 minutes
Incredible heat	140°F or warmer	2 hours	Moderate fire every minute

* Adjust temperatures down by 15° in areas of high humidity.

WIND

Wind imposes a circumstance penalty on auditory Perception checks depending on its strength. It also interferes with physical ranged attacks, imposing a circumstance penalty to attack rolls involving such weapons, and potentially making attacks with them impossible in powerful windstorms. Wind snuffs out handheld flames; lanterns protect open flame from the wind, but particularly powerful winds can extinguish these as well.

Moving in Wind

Wind is difficult or greater difficult terrain when Flying. Moving in wind of sufficient strength requires a Maneuver in Flight action, and fliers are blown away on a critical failure or if they don't succeed at a minimum of one such check each round.

Even on the ground, particularly strong winds might require a creature to succeed at an Athletics check to move, knocking the creature back and prone on a critical failure. On such checks, Small creatures typically take a –1 circumstance penalty, and Tiny creatures typically take a –2 penalty.

GRAVITY

Most habitable planets have gravity similar to Earth or the world of Lost Golarion, defined as normal gravity. Other environments have higher or lower gravity, potentially debilitating characters or empowering them like superheroes.

EXTREME GRAVITY

An environment with extreme gravity is dangerous for most characters. In addition to the effects of high gravity (see below), a character takes minor to moderate bludgeoning damage per minute.

HIGH GRAVITY

An environment with high gravity will be oppressive for most creatures. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is doubled, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry only half as much. Creatures used to normal gravity move at half Speed and can jump only half as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are impossible beyond the third range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in high gravity take bludgeoning damage equal to the distance they fell.

NORMAL GRAVITY

Normal gravity environments have conditions similar to planets like Earth or Lost Golarion.

LOW GRAVITY

An environment with low gravity is liberating for creatures accustomed to normal or higher gravity. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is halved, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry twice as much and jump twice as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are possible up to the twelfth range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in low gravity take no damage for the first 10 feet of a fall and then take bludgeoning damage equal to a quarter of the remaining distance it fell.

ZERO GRAVITY

Environments such as outer space and some small satellites have zero gravity (also referred to as zero-g). Creatures in zero-g have the clumsy 1, off-guard, and untethered conditions. A creature in a zero gravity environment can lift and carry 10 times their normal amount and multiplies the ranges of thrown weapons by 10.

Movement in Zero Gravity

Creatures in a zero-g environment float aimlessly without a method of propulsion, cosmic flight, or nearby objects to Push Off of (*Player Core* 441). Creatures with a natural fly Speed can't use their fly Speed in zero-g unless they have the cosmic trait. Creatures flying via propulsion, such as jetpacks, starship thrusters, and spells like *fly* or *void vessel*, are unaffected. Unless a creature has a means of moving in zero-g, it gains the untethered condition (*Player Core* 441).

RADIATION

Radiation is a threat to adventurers, whether it's the radiation emitted from stars or the radiation generated by various technological wonders of the universe.

RADIATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Radiation has a disrupting effect on technological items. Low-level radiation typically has no effect on technological items, but higher levels of radiation impose the glitching condition on technological equipment. This effect typically lasts until the item is removed from the source of radiation. Technological items exposed to particularly powerful radiation stop working entirely until they're removed from the source of radiation and permanently gain the glitching condition until they're repaired.

> **GRAVITY ADAPTATIONS**
>
> Most characters are accustomed to normal gravity conditions, but if your character's home world has unusually high gravity, that might be the norm for them, meaning they don't suffer penalties while exploring such an environment. For example, a barathu character living on Bretheda should have no trouble adapting to other high-gravity worlds but would still take bludgeoning damage in extreme-gravity environments.

RADIATION SICKNESS

Radiation sickness is a disease that damages a creature's body at a cellular level, causing sickness and even death. Radiation sickness is often grouped into four broad categories: mild, severe, extreme, and incredible. The effects of these categories of radiation sickness are described in Diseases starting on page 90, though other types of radiation sickness are known to exist.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Climate and environmental features can be a hindrance or long-term threat, but natural disasters represent acute danger, especially to those directly exposed to their fury.

ACID RAIN

Acid rain is a catchall term for corrosive precipitation. Acid rain affects visibility and causes fatigue like normal precipitation but also deals minor acid damage each minute. Acid rain sometimes occurs as part of a thunderstorm.

AVALANCHES

Though the term avalanche specifically refers to a cascading flow of ice and snow down a mountain's slope, the same rules work for landslides, mudslides, and other similar disasters. Avalanches of wet snow usually travel up to 200 feet per round, though powdery snow can travel up to 10 times faster. Rockslides and mudslides are slower, sometimes even slow enough that a character might be able to outrun them.

An avalanche deals major or even massive bludgeoning damage to creatures and objects in its path. These victims are also buried under a significant mass. Creatures caught in an avalanche's path can attempt a Reflex save; if they succeed, they take only half the bludgeoning damage, and if they critically succeed, they also avoid being buried.

Burial

Buried creatures take minor bludgeoning damage each minute, and they potentially take minor cold damage if buried under an avalanche of snow. At the GM's discretion,

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creatures without a sufficient air pocket could also risk suffocation (*Player Core* 429). A buried creature is restrained and usually can't free itself.

Allies or bystanders can attempt to dig out a buried creature. Each creature digging clears roughly a 5-foot-by-5-foot square every 4 minutes with a successful Athletics check (or every 2 minutes on a critical success). Using shovels or other proper tools halves the time.

BLIZZARDS

Blizzards combine cold weather, heavy snow, and strong winds. They don't pose a single direct threat as other disasters do; instead, the combination of these factors all at once poses a substantial impediment to characters.

COLLAPSES

Collapses and cave-ins occur when caverns or buildings fall, dumping tons of rock or other material on those caught below or inside them. Creatures under the collapse take major or massive bludgeoning damage and become buried, just as with an avalanche. Fortunately, collapses don't spread unless they weaken the overall integrity of the area and lead to further collapses.

EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes often cause other natural disasters in the form of avalanches, collapses, floods, and tsunamis, but they also present unique threats such as fissures, soil liquefaction, and tremors.

Fissures

Fissures and other ground ruptures can destabilize structures, but more directly they lead to creatures taking bludgeoning damage from falling into a fissure.

Soil Liquefaction

Liquefaction occurs when granular particles shake to the point where they temporarily lose their solid form and act as liquids. When this happens to soil, it can cause creatures and even whole buildings to sink into the ground. You can use the *earthquake* spell for more specific rules, though that spell represents only one particular kind of localized quake.

Tremors

Tremors knock creatures prone, causing them to fall or careen into other objects, which can deal bludgeoning damage appropriate to the severity of the quake.

FLOODS

Though more gradual floods can damage structures and drown creatures, flash floods are similar to avalanches, except with a liquid mass instead of a solid one. Instead of burying creatures, a flash flood carries creatures and even massive objects away, buffeting the creatures and potentially drowning them. The drowning rules appear on page 429 of *Player Core*.

GRAVITY WELLS

Gravity wells are dense objects or regions that generate their own gravity. Gravity wells create an area of difficult terrain or greater difficult terrain (depending on their density) for a creature moving away from them. At the end of a creature's turn, it moves a certain distance depending on the gravity well's mass. For example, the malfunctioning artificial gravity generator of a starship moves a creature 10 feet toward it at the end of that creature's turn.

MAGNETIC STORMS

Magnetic storms are spikes in magnetic activity that interfere with technology on certain planets. Unshielded technology starts glitching during a magnetic storm and stops working during a severe magnetic storm.

PSYSTORMS

A psystorm is a magical weather pattern that occurs on some planets. Winds that howl with alien voices, sudden flashes of color and sound, and other bizarre phenomena accompany psystorms. Creatures without shelter take minor to moderate mental damage each minute during a psystorm. There's also a chance that a character might be struck by a bolt of magical energy during a psystorm. An energy bolt usually deals moderate damage of a randomly determined type.

SANDSTORMS

Mild sandstorms and dust storms don't present much more danger than a windy rainstorm, but they can cause damage to a creature's lungs and spread diseases across long distances. Heavy sandstorms deal minor slashing damage each round to those exposed to the sand, force creatures to hold their breath to avoid suffocation, or both.

TORNADOES

In a tornado's path, wind conditions impose severe circumstance penalties, but creatures that would normally be blown away are instead picked up in the tornado's funnel, where they take massive bludgeoning damage from flying debris as they rise through the cone until they're eventually expelled (taking bludgeoning damage from falling).

Tornadoes usually travel around 300 feet per round (roughly 30 miles per hour). They normally travel a few miles before dissipating. Some tornadoes are stationary or travel much faster.

TSUNAMIS

Tsunamis present many of the same dangers as flash floods but are much larger and more destructive. Tsunami waves can reach 100 feet or more in height, wrecking buildings and creatures alike with massive bludgeoning damage from both the wave itself and debris pulled up along its path of destruction.

VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

Volcanic eruptions can contain any combination of ash, lava bombs, lava flows, pyroclastic flows, and vents.

Ash
Ash from volcanic eruptions is hot enough to cause minor fire damage each minute. It limits visibility like a thick fog and can make air unbreathable, requiring characters to hold their breath or suffocate (*Player Core* 429). Ash clouds generate ash lightning strikes, which typically deal moderate electricity damage but are very unlikely to hit an individual creature. Ash buildup on the ground creates areas of uneven ground, difficult terrain, or greater difficult terrain, and ash in the atmosphere can block the sun for weeks or even months, leading to colder temperatures and longer winters.

Lava Bombs
Pressure can launch lava into the air that falls as lava bombs: masses of lava that solidify as they fly and shatter on impact, dealing at least moderate bludgeoning damage and moderate fire damage.

Lava Flows
Lava flows are an iconic volcanic threat; they usually move between 5 and 60 feet per round over normal ground, so characters can often outrun them. However, flows can move up to 300 feet per round in a steep volcanic tube or channel. Lava emanates heat that deal minor fire damage even before it comes into contact with creatures, and immersion in lava deals massive fire damage each round.

Pyroclastic Flows
Mixes of hot gases and rock debris, pyroclastic flows spread much faster than lava, sometimes more than 4,000 feet per round. While cooler than the hottest lava, pyroclastic flows are capable of overwhelming entire settlements. They work like avalanches but deal half of their damage as fire damage.

Vents
Steam vents shoot from the ground, dealing moderate fire damage or more in a wide column. Acidic and poisonous gases released from beneath the surface can create wide areas of hazardous terrain that deals at least minor acid or poison damage.

VORTEX
Swirling windstorms sweep through the atmosphere of some planets, especially gas giants. Vortexes are more powerful than tornadoes, often traveling at speeds over 400 miles per hour. Some dissipate within hours, while others rage for years, fueled by superheated volatile gases. Vortexes deal massive bludgeoning damage each minute to creatures and objects (often including starships) in their path and carry them for hundreds of miles. Superheated vortexes also deal massive fire damage.

WILDFIRES
Wildfires travel mainly along a front moving in a single direction. In a forest, the front can advance up to 70 feet per round (7 miles per hour). They can move up to twice as fast across plains due to a lack of shade and the relatively low humidity. Embers from the fire, carried by winds and rising hot air, can scatter, forming spot fires as far as 10 miles away from the main wildfire. Wildfires present three main threats: flames, heat, and smoke.

Flames
Flames are hazardous terrain, usually dealing moderate damage and potentially setting a character on fire, dealing moderate persistent fire damage. The flames from a small fire are often less dangerous than the advancing heat from the front of a large fire.

Heat
Wildfires increase the temperature in advance of the front, reaching nearly 1,500°F at the fire's arrival, as hot as some lava. This begins as minor fire damage every round at a reasonable distance from the front and increases to massive fire damage for someone within the wildfire.

Smoke
Wind can carry smoke far in front of the wildfire itself. Smoke imposes a circumstance penalty to visual Perception checks, depending on the thickness. It causes creatures viewed through significant amounts of smoke to be concealed, and it cuts off all visibility at half a mile or less. Near or within the wildfire, the combination of smoke and heated air require characters to hold their breath or suffocate (*Player Core* 429).



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HAZARDS

The galaxy is rife with devious traps and security systems meant to protect everything from mundane valuables and sensitive intelligence to ancient magical relics and cutting-edge prototypes. These traps come in many forms, ranging from mechanical devices that shoot tranquilizer darts and technological security systems that emit a maze of dangerous laser beams to magic runes that tear open rips in reality or time. In addition to traps, adventurers might stumble into other types of hazards, including naturally occurring environmental hazards, mysterious hauntings, and more.

DETECTING A HAZARD

Every hazard has a trigger of some kind that sets its dangers in motion. For traps, this could be a mechanism like a trip wire or a pressure plate, while for an environmental hazard or haunt, the trigger might simply be proximity. When characters approach a hazard, they have a chance of finding the trigger area or mechanism before triggering the hazard. They automatically receive a check to detect hazards unless the hazards require a minimum proficiency rank to do so.

During exploration, determine whether the party detects a hazard when the PCs first enter the general area in which it appears. If the hazard doesn't list a minimum proficiency rank, roll a secret Perception check against the hazard's Stealth DC for each PC. For hazards with a minimum proficiency rank, roll only if someone is actively searching (using the Search activity while exploring or the Seek action in an encounter), and only if they have the listed proficiency rank or higher. Anyone who succeeds becomes aware of the hazard, and you describe what they notice.

Magical hazards that don't have a minimum proficiency rank listed can be found using *detect magic*, but this spell doesn't provide enough information to understand or disable the hazard–it only reveals the hazard's presence. Determining a magical hazard's properties thoroughly enough to disable it requires either the use of more powerful magic or a successful skill check, likely using Identify Magic or Recall Knowledge. Magical hazards with a minimum proficiency rank can't be found with *detect magic* at all.

TRIGGERING A HAZARD

If the group fails to detect a hazard and the hazard's trigger is

a standard part of traveling (such as stepping on a floor plate or moving through a motion sensor while walking), the hazard's reaction occurs. Hazards that would be triggered only when someone directly manipulates the environment—by opening a door or touching a control panel, for example—use their reactions only if a PC explicitly takes that action.

REACTION OR FREE ACTION

Most hazards have reactions that occur when they're triggered. For simple hazards, the reaction is the entirety of the hazard's effect. For complex hazards, the reaction might also cause the hazard to roll initiative, either starting a combat encounter or joining one already in progress, and the hazard continues to pose a threat over multiple rounds. Some hazards have a triggered free action instead of a reaction; for instance, an electric fence can shock multiple creatures per round.

ROUTINE

A complex hazard usually follows a set of preprogrammed actions called a routine. Once triggered, the hazard first performs its initial reaction; then, if the PCs aren't yet in encounter mode, they should roll initiative. If they're already in encounter mode, their initiative remains the same. The hazard might tell you to roll initiative for it—in this case, the hazard rolls initiative using its Stealth modifier.

After this happens, the hazard follows its routine each round on its initiative. The number of actions a hazard can take each round, as well as what they can be used for, depends on the hazard.

RESETTING A HAZARD

Some hazards can be reset, allowing them to be triggered again. This can occur automatically, as for psychotropic spores, which regrow over the course of 2 weeks. In some cases, you might design a trap that must be reset manually, such as a grenade launcher turret that must be reloaded after being triggered.

DISABLING A HAZARD

The most versatile method for deactivating traps is the Disable a Device action of the Thievery skill, though many mechanical and technological traps can also simply be smashed, and magical traps can usually be counteracted. Sometimes, mechanical or technological traps can also be deactivated with Computers or Crafting. Environmental hazards often can be overcome with Nature or Survival, and haunts can often be overcome with Occultism or Religion. The specific skill and DC required to disable a hazard are listed in the hazard's stat block. Like using Disable a Device, using these skills to disable a trap is a 2-action activity with the same degrees of success, though the activity might have different traits determined by the GM. As with detecting a hazard, disabling a hazard might require a character to have a certain proficiency rank in the listed skill.

A character must first detect a hazard (or have it pointed out to them) to try to deactivate it. They can attempt to deactivate a hazard whether or not it has already been triggered, though some hazards no longer pose a danger once their reactions have occurred, especially if there's no way for them to be reset.

For most hazards, a successful check for the listed skill against the DC in the stat block disables the hazard without triggering it. Any other means of deactivating the hazard are included in the hazard's stat block, as are any additional steps required to properly deactivate it. A critical failure on any roll to disable a hazard triggers it, including a critical failure on a roll to counteract a magical hazard.

Some hazards require multiple successful checks to deactivate, typically because they have a particularly complicated component or have several discrete portions. For hazards with a complex component, a critical success on a check to disable the hazard counts as two successes on a single component.

DAMAGING A HAZARD

Rather than trying to carefully disable a hazard, a character might just smash it. Damaging a mechanical trap or another physical hazard works like damaging objects: the hazard reduces the damage it takes by its Hardness. In most cases, hitting the hazard also triggers it, as explained in Attacking a Hazard below. If a hazard's Hit Points are reduced to its Broken Threshold (BT) or lower, the hazard becomes broken and can't be activated, though it can still be repaired. If it's reduced to 0 HP, it is destroyed and can't be repaired. (See page 236 of *Player Core* for more information on damaging objects.)

Hazards' AC, applicable saving throw modifiers, Hardness, HP, and BT are listed in their stat blocks. A hazard that doesn't list one of these statistics can't be affected by anything targeting that statistic. For example, a hazard that has HP but no BT can't be broken, but it can still be destroyed. Hazards are immune to anything an object is immune to unless specifically noted otherwise, and they can't be targeted by anything that can't target objects. Some hazards might have additional immunities, as well as resistances or weaknesses.

Attacking a Hazard

If someone hits a hazard—especially if it's a mechanical trap—they usually trigger it, though you might determine otherwise in some cases. An attack that breaks the hazard might prevent it from triggering, depending on the circumstances. If the hazard has multiple parts, breaking one part might still trigger the trap. For example, if a trap has a trip wire in one location and launches an attack from another location, severing the trip wire could still trigger the attack. Destroying a trap in one blow almost never triggers it. These rules also apply to most damaging spells or other effects in addition to attacks.

Repairing a Hazard

You might allow a character to repair a damaged hazard to restore its functionality. You determine the specifics of this since it can vary by trap. The Repair action might be insufficient if fixing the trap requires gathering scattered components or the like. If the item has a Reset entry, the character needs to do whatever is listed there, in addition to repairing the damage.

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MONSTERS AND HAZARDS

The statistics for NPCs and monsters usually don't list their proficiency ranks. Most of the time, they don't need to deal with detecting or disabling hazards the way PCs do, so you don't need this information. However, if a PC resets a trap in a monster's path or plans to lure a monster into a hazard, you can improvise this information.

For Perception, a monster is usually an expert at 3rd or 4th level, a master at 8th or 9th level, and legendary at 16th or 17th level. If the monster has Thievery listed in its skills, it has the highest proficiency possible for its level (trained at 1st, expert at 3rd, master at 7th, and legendary at 15th); otherwise, it's untrained. Of course, an individual monster might deviate from these guidelines, especially if it's mindless or not very perceptive.

COUNTERACTING A MAGICAL HAZARD

Some magical hazards can be counteracted using *dispel magic* and the counteracting rules (*Player Core* 301). These hazards' spell ranks and counteract DCs are listed in their stat block. Counteracting a hazard otherwise works like using a skill check to disable the hazard.

HAZARD EXPERIENCE

Characters gain Experience Points for overcoming a hazard, whether they disable it, avoid it, or simply endure its attacks. If they trigger the same hazard later on, they don't gain XP for the hazard again. The XP values for hazards of different levels also appear on page 57 but are repeated here for convenience. The XP for a complex hazard is equal to the XP for a monster of the same level, and the XP for a simple hazard is one-fifth of that. Hazards of a lower level than the party's level – 4 are trivial and award no XP.

HAZARD XP

Level	Simple Hazard	Complex Hazard
Party level – 4	2 XP	10 XP
Party level – 3	3 XP	15 XP
Party level – 2	4 XP	20 XP
Party level – 1	6 XP	30 XP
Party level	8 XP	40 XP
Party level + 1	12 XP	60 XP
Party level + 2	16 XP	80 XP
Party level + 3	24 XP	120 XP
Party level + 4	30 XP	150 XP

HAZARD FORMAT

Hazards are presented in a stat block format similar to those used for monsters. A few notes regarding the format follow the sample stat block.

HAZARD NAME **HAZARD LEVEL**

TRAITS

Stealth This entry lists the Stealth modifier for a complex hazard's initiative or the Stealth DC to detect a simple hazard, followed by the minimum proficiency rank to detect the hazard (if any) in parentheses. If *detect magic* can be used to detect the hazard, this information is located here as well.

Description This explains what the hazard looks like and might include special rules.

Disable The DC of any skill checks required to disable the hazard are here; if the hazard can be counteracted, its spell rank and counteract DC are listed in parentheses.

AC the hazard's AC; **Saving Throw**s the hazard's saves. Usually only haunts are subject to Will saves.

Hardness the hazard's Hardness; **HP** the hazard's Hit Points, with its Broken Threshold in parentheses; **Immunities** the hazard's immunities; **Weaknesses** the hazard's weaknesses, if any; **Resistances** the hazard's resistances, if any

Action Type ↷ or ◈ This is the reaction or free action the hazard uses; **Trigger** The trigger that sets off the hazard appears here; **Effect** For a simple hazard, this effect is often all the hazard does. For a complex hazard, this might also cause the hazard to roll initiative.

Routine This entry describes what a complex hazard does on each of its turns during an encounter; the number in parentheses after the word "Routine" indicates how many actions the hazard can use each turn. Simple hazards don't have this entry.

Action Any action the hazard can use appears here. Typically, this is a melee or ranged Strike.

Reset If the hazard can be reset, that information is here.

LEVEL

The hazard's level indicates what level of party it's a good challenge for. If the hazard involves a toxin, curse, or other non-spell feature, that feature's level is the hazard's level.

TRAITS

The most notable hazard traits are trap (constructed to harm intruders), environmental (natural hazards), and haunt (spectral phenomena). Traps have a trait to indicate whether they're magical, mechanical, or tech (but can include any or all of these traits). Hazards that have initiative and a routine have the complex trait.

STEALTH OR STEALTH DC

Complex hazards list their Stealth modifier, which they use for initiative, instead of their Stealth DC. If you need the DC, it's equal to this modifier + 10.

SIMPLE HAZARDS

A simple hazard uses its reaction only once, after which its threat is over unless the hazard is reset.

ANTI-GRAVITY PULSE **HAZARD 0**

TECH TRAP

Stealth DC 13

Description A harmful pulse of anti-gravity is activated by a sensor that detects motion within 30 feet.

Disable DC 18 Computers (trained) to jam the motion detector's signal or DC 16 Thievery (trained) to deactivate the motion detector

Gravity Pulse ↻ (force) **Trigger** A creature enters the sensor's detection area; **Effect** The trap releases a gravity pulse, dealing 2d6+3 force damage to the triggering creature (DC 15 basic Reflex save). The area within 30 feet of the sensor then becomes zero gravity for 1 minute.

Reset The trap resets after 15 minutes.

CAUSTIC NECTAR SPRAY HAZARD 0

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 16

Description An alien flower sprays a stream of caustic nectar.

Disable DC 13 Nature (trained) to lull the flower into a passive state, or DC 13 Survival (trained) to mislead the flower's senses; DC 16 Acrobatics to move by the flower without triggering it (this doesn't disable the trap)

AC 16; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +3

HP 20; **Immunities** acid, mental

Nectar Spray ↻ **Trigger** A creature comes within 15 feet of the flower; **Effect** The flower makes a nectar Strike against the triggering creature.

Ranged nectar +11 (acid, range increment 15 feet), **Damage** 2d6+3 acid

Reset The flower's nectar reserve is refilled after 1 hour.

CRYO MIST HAZARD 10

TECH TRAP

Stealth DC 35 (master)

Description Hidden nozzles in the ceiling release hyper-cold air, potentially freezing intruders in place.

Disable DC 27 Computers (master) to increase the air's temperature to safe levels, or DC 27 Thievery (master) to deactivate the nozzles

Freeze! ↻ (cold, incapacitation) **Trigger** A creature moves below the nozzles; **Effect** The trap sprays cold air on the triggering creature, dealing 4d10+26 cold damage (DC 33 Fortitude save).

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and becomes clumsy 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage, becomes clumsy 2, and becomes slowed 1 or 1d4 rounds.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, becomes clumsy 2, and becomes paralyzed for 1 minute.

Creatures within 10 feet of the triggering creature take 2d12+13 cold damage (DC 29 basic Fortitude save).

Reset The trap resets after 1 minute.

DEVASTATING COLLISION HAZARD 17

HAUNT

Stealth DC 43 (master) to hear the roar of hover jets

Description A phantom hover truck collides with creatures, replaying an accident from the past in gory detail.

Disable DC 38 Occultism (master) to disperse the phantom truck, or DC 36 Religion (master) to ward yourself from harm

HAZARDS BY LEVEL

This chapter's hazards are organized by complexity, then by name. If you need to choose a hazard for a certain level of play, use the following table.

Hazard Name	Level	Complexity	Page
Anti-Gravity Pulse	0	Simple	104
Caustic Nectar Spray	0	Simple	105
Phantom Communication	0	Simple	107
Venting Airlock	1	Simple	109
Distracting Holo Ad	1	Complex	110
Laser Turret	1	Complex	111
Summoning Rune	1	Complex	112
Explosive Overload	2	Simple	106
Tranquilizer Darts Trap	2	Simple	108
Hacker's Folly	2	Complex	110
Laser Web	3	Simple	106
Electric Fence	3	Complex	110
Jolting Console	4	Simple	106
Psychotropic Spores	4	Simple	107
Deadly Vidgame	4	Complex	109
Sentry Turret	5	Complex	112
Traumatic Moment	6	Simple	108
Haywire Robotic Arm	6	Simple	106
Trash Compactor	6	Complex	112
Exploding Egg Sac	7	Simple	106
Reality Geyser	7	Complex	112
Vision of Manifold Realities	8	Simple	109
Disintegration Chamber	8	Complex	109
Monument to the Devourer	9	Simple	107
Haywire Autopilot	9	Complex	111
Cryo Mist	10	Simple	105
Repulsing Force Field	11	Simple	107
Mutation Fog	12	Simple	107
Temporal Rift	13	Simple	108
Collapsing Building	14	Complex	109
Soul Upload	15	Simple	108
Quantum Clone	16	Complex	111
Devastating Collision	17	Simple	105
Reactor Meltdown	19	Complex	111
Memory Crystals	20	Simple	106

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Crash ➲ **Trigger** A creature crosses the street; **Effect** A phantom hover truck crashes into all creatures crossing the street, dealing 6d12+37 bludgeoning damage (DC 43 Fortitude save).

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage, is knocked prone, and is pushed 10 feet back.

Failure The creature takes full damage, is knocked prone, and is pushed 20 feet back.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, is knocked prone, and is pushed 30 feet back.

Reset 1 day

EXPLOSIVE OVERLOAD HAZARD 2

MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 14

Description A generator, engine, or other large immobile device overloads and is moments from catastrophically exploding.

Disable DC 19 Crafting (trained) to safely shut down the device, or DC 21 Thievery (trained) to quickly vent the device

Explode ➲ **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the device; **Effect** The trap makes a loud noise. At the end of the next round, the device explodes, dealing 2d6+5 piercing damage to all creatures within 15 feet of the device (DC 18 basic Reflex save). This explosion destroys the device.



Jolting Console

EXPLODING EGG SAC HAZARD 7

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 21

Description An ovular alien egg sac emerges from the ground or other surface; pulsing, veinlike filaments cover all surfaces in a 30-foot radius around the egg sac.

Disable DC 30 Nature (trained) to cause the egg sac to implode, or DC 23 Survival (expert) to safely destroy the filaments in an adjacent square

AC 22; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12

Hardness 14; **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** mental

Explode ➲ **Trigger** A creature touches the egg sac or touches a filament; **Effect** The trap makes a filament Strike against all creatures within 30 feet of the egg sac, then the egg sac explodes, dealing 2d10+9 acid damage to all creatures within 30 feet (DC 29 basic Reflex save). If the creature within the egg sac is viable, it hatches.

Melee filament +18, **Damage** 2d10+9 slashing; no multiple attack penalty

Reset If the egg sac survives and hasn't hatched, filaments regrow in 1 day.

HAYWIRE ROBOTIC ARM HAZARD 6

MECHANICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth DC 18

Description A robotic manufacturing arm malfunctions, attacking nearby creatures.

Disable DC 20 Computers (trained) to debug the malfunctioning arm, or DC 25 Crafting (trained) to cause the arm's joints to seize, or DC 23 Thievery (trained) to disable the arm

AC 24; **Fort** +11 **Ref** +17

Hardness 12; **HP** 58 (BT 29); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** electricity 10

Manufacture ➲ **Trigger** A creature moves within reach of the robotic arm; **Effect** The trap makes an arm Strike against the triggering creature, then Grabs (+17 Athletics). A creature grabbed by the trap takes 1d6 persistent bludgeoning damage until they Escape (DC 27) or the trap is deactivated or destroyed.

Melee arm +20 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d6+15 bludgeoning plus Grab

JOLTING CONSOLE HAZARD 4

ELECTRICITY | TECH | TRAP

Stealth DC 22 (trained)

Description A shock grid built into a computer console or door panel releases a powerful electric charge.

Disable DC 16 Computers (trained) to disable the console's programming, or DC 17 Crafting (trained) to rewire the shock grid, or DC 18 Thievery (trained) to deactivate the shock grid

Jolt ➲ (electricity) **Trigger** A creature grasps the console directly or with a tool; **Effect** The trap deals 5d8 electricity damage to the triggering creature and creatures within 5 feet of the triggering creature (DC 25 basic Reflex save).

LASER WEB HAZARD 3

MECHANICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth DC 15 (trained)

Description Six sensors concealed in a 15-foot-long corridor fire lasers when they detect movement.

Disable DC 15 Computers (trained) or Thievery (trained) to disable each sensor, or DC 23 Acrobatics (expert) to slip past each sensor

Sensor AC 22; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +6

Sensor Hardness 4; **Sensor HP** 7 (BT 3) each; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Laser Web ➲ **Trigger** A creature moves within 5 feet of a sensor; **Effect** The lasers fire, each one Striking a creature in the hallway. If there are more creatures than lasers, the lasers prioritize the triggering creature or creatures; if there are fewer creatures than lasers, the lasers prioritize Striking the triggering creature or creatures multiple times.

Melee laser +16, **Damage** 2d10+7 fire; no multiple attack penalty

Reset The trap resets after 15 minutes.

MEMORY CRYSTALS HAZARD 20

ENVIRONMENTAL | MAGICAL | MENTAL

Stealth DC 38 (expert) or *detect magic*

Description Glowing yellow crystals refract the blurred imprints of stolen memories within their facets.

Disable DC 48 Arcana (legendary) to erect mental wards, or DC 48 Occultism (legendary) to harmlessly feed surface thoughts to the crystals, or DC 51 Religion (legendary) to pray for protection from the crystals

AC 42; **Fort** +36 **Ref** +30

Hardness 33; **HP** 134 (BT 67); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Leech Memories ↻ **Trigger** A non-mindless creature comes within 5 feet of the memory crystals; **Effect** The memory crystals expand into every square adjacent to their space. As they grow, they absorb memories and ambient thought from their surroundings, dealing 8d10 mental damage (DC 42 basic Will save) to creatures within 10 feet after they expand.

Memory Field (aura, mental) 5 feet. Memory crystals deal 8d10 mental damage to nearby creatures.

Reset After expanding, the memory crystals can't grow again for 1 day.

MONUMENT TO THE DEVOURER — HAZARD 9

HAUNT

Stealth DC 10

Description This shrine has long served as an altar for sacrificial rites and foul magic. When non-believers approach the monument, the souls of all those killed here surge out to reap their lives.

Disable DC 33 Deception (master) to pose as a believer and command the monument to still, or DC 30 Religion (expert) to pray to the gods for protection, or DC 30 Occultism (expert) to soothe the trapped spirits; two successes are required to disable it

AC 28; **Fort** +21 **Ref** +15

Hardness 18; **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** holy 10, spirit 10, vitality 10

Surge of Trapped Souls ↻ (void) **Trigger** A living creature moves within 15 feet of the monument; **Effect** The souls of all those killed by this monument surge outward, dealing 4d10+22 void damage to all living creatures within 60 feet of the monument (DC 28 basic Fortitude save). Creatures killed by this haunt have their soul trapped in the monument until the monument is destroyed.

Reset 1 hour

MUTATION FOG — HAZARD 12

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 30 (expert)

Description A fog of transmutative fumes fills a 30-foot radius area, painfully mutating creatures who enter.

Disable DC 35 Nature (master) to neutralize the fog, or DC 35 Survival (master) to disperse the fog

Harmful Mutation ↻ (polymorph) **Trigger** A creature begins its turn in the fog; **Effect** The fog surges with energy, dealing 6d10+27 bludgeoning damage to all creatures in the fog as it harmfully mutates their bodies. Creatures in the area must attempt a DC 32 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage. It resists mutation.

Failure The creature takes full damage. Its flesh becomes coated in foul-smelling blisters for 1 hour. For as long as it has this mutation, it is sickened 1 and can't reduce the value of its sickened condition.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage. Its limbs become painfully twisted for 1d4 hours. For as long as it has this mutation, it is sickened 2 and can't reduce the value of its sickened condition.

PHANTOM COMMUNICATION — HAZARD 0

HAUNT

Stealth DC 16 (trained) to notice strange static

Description Angry spirits utter haunting threats and condemnations through a nearby comm unit.

Disable DC 15 Religion (trained) to banish the spirits, or DC 18 Performance to drown out the spirits' voices, or DC 16 Computers (trained) to disperse the ghostly signal

Threatening Message ↻ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental) **Trigger** A creature with a comm unit enters the haunt's area; **Effect** The haunt utters threats through the triggering comm unit, dealing 1d6+4 mental damage to creatures within 20 feet of the comm unit (DC 19 basic Will save). On a failure, the creature is also frightened 1.

Reset 1 hour

PSYCHOTROPIC SPORES — HAZARD 4

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 25 (trained)

Description A colorful fungus releases psychotropic spores when a creature comes near.

Disable DC 20 Nature (trained) to force the fungus into a dormant state, or DC 22 Survival (trained) to safely remove the fungus

Mind-Numbing Spores (aura, poison) 5 feet. Creatures in the aura take a –2 circumstance penalty to saves against poison.

AC 18; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +8

HP 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** mental

Release Spores ↻ (mental, poison) **Trigger** A creatures touches or damages the fungus; **Effect** The fungus releases psychotropic spores in a 30-foot emanation. All creatures in the area must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or be confused for 1 round and stupefied 1 for 10 minutes (stupefied 2 on a critical failure).

Reset Dormant fungus reactivates in 1 hour; destroyed fungus regrows over the course of 2 weeks.

REPULSING FORCE FIELD — HAZARD 11

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 33 (expert)

Description A translucent force field appears to block a creature's path, shunting it and any other creature that attempts to pass it away.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (expert) to disable the force field, or *dispel magic* (6th rank; counteract DC 29) to counteract the force field

AC 31; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +18

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Force Field Hardness 20; **Force Field HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Forbid Entry ↷ (arcane) **Trigger** A creature attempts to pass the designated area; **Effect** The force field appears and shunts the creature away, making a Strike against the triggering creature.

Melee force field +28, **Damage** 6d8+20 force damage plus the target is knocked back 10 feet (20 feet on a critical hit). The force field takes a –2 circumstance penalty to hit if the triggering creature Stepped or was moved by a forced movement effect.

Reset The force field deactivates and the trap resets after 1 minute.

SOUL UPLOAD — HAZARD 15

MAGICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth DC 40 (master)

Description A computer is protected by a hybrid trap, which uploads the soul of all unauthorized users to an inert data module on the computer.

Disable DC 36 Arcana (expert) to drain the computer's magical energy, or DC 36 Computers (expert) to falsify authorized credentials, or DC 40 Thievery (expert) to disable the trap, or *dispel magic* (7th rank; counteract DC 34) to counteract the trap

Upload Soul ↷ (incapacitation, occult) **Trigger** An unauthorized creature grasps the computer directly or with a tool; **Effect** The trap attempts to upload the triggering creature's soul into the computer. The triggering creature must attempt a DC 40 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 3d10+15 spirit damage.

Failure The creature's soul is temporarily pulled from their body. It takes 6d10+30 spirit damage and is stunned 3.

Critical Failure The creature's soul is pulled from its body and uploaded to a data module on the computer. Its body remains a soulless vessel, which slowly dies over the course of 1 week unless its soul is returned. Destroying the computer destroys its soul.

TEMPORAL RIFT — HAZARD 13

MAGICAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 29 (trained)

Description A rift in time rapidly ages and slows anyone who draws near.

Disable DC 36 Arcana (master) or Occultism (master) to magically mend time, DC 40 Thievery (master) to repair the time rift, or *dispel magic* (7th rank; counteract DC 31) to counteract the rift

Time Shudder ↷ (occult) **Trigger** A creature moves within 10 feet of the rift; **Effect** The triggering creature takes 6d10+20 damage as its body rapidly ages. It must attempt a DC 33 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and becomes clumsy 1 and enfeebled 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage, and becomes clumsy 2 and enfeebled 2.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, becomes clumsy 2 and enfeebled 2, and becomes slowed for 1 minute.



Memory Crystals

TRAUMATIC MOMENT — HAZARD 6

HAUNT

Stealth DC 21 (expert)

Description A psychic imprint of a horrific event replays in vivid detail.

Disable DC 28 Occultism (expert) or Religion (expert) to cleanse the area

Jump Scare ↷ (emotion, fear, illusion, mental, occult) **Trigger** A creature moves within 10 feet of the haunted area; **Effect** The haunt replays the traumatic moment that created it, vividly assaulting the creature's senses as though the creature was experiencing the event. The creature must attempt a DC 24 Will save.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes 2d8+5 mental damage and becomes frightened 1.

Failure The target takes 4d8+10 mental damage and becomes frightened 2.

Critical Failure The target takes 8d8+20 mental damage and becomes frightened 3.

TRANQUILIZER DARTS TRAP — HAZARD 2

MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 21 (trained)

Description Weight-sensitive pressure plates in the floor trigger a hole at the hallway's end to fire tranquilizer darts at creatures in the hall.

Disable DC 18 Crafting (trained) or Thievery (trained) to disable the pressure plates

Dart Volley ↷ **Trigger** A creature steps on a pressure plate; **Effect** The trap makes a tranquilizer dart Strike against up to three creatures in the hall.

Ranged tranquilizer dart +14, **Damage** 1d6 piercing and 1d6 poison plus tranquilizer; no multiple attack penalty

Tranquilizer (incapacitation, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** clumsy 1 and stunned 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** clumsy 2 and asleep for 1 minute (1 minute)

VENTING AIRLOCK — HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 14 (trained)

Description A malfunctioning airlock opens unexpectedly while creatures are inside.

Disable DC 17 Crafting (trained) to repair the airlock, or DC 17 Thievery (trained) to jam the airlock closed

Vent ↷ Trigger One or more creatures enters the airlock compartment; **Effect** The outer airlock door opens, venting breathable air out into the vacuum or harmful atmosphere beyond. The creature begins suffocating and must attempt a DC 20 Reflex save.

Success The target is unaffected.

Failure The target is sucked 10 feet out of the airlock and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Critical Failure The target is sucked 10 feet out of the airlock and takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

VISION OF MANIFOLD REALITIES HAZARD 8

MAGICAL | MENTAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 31 (expert) or *detect magic*

Description Wisps of reality-warping magic that flit through the room are drawn to intelligent creatures, filling their minds with visions of countless alternate realities.

Disable DC 26 Arcana (expert) to banish the visions, or DC 28 Occultism (expert) to exert your will over the visions, or *dispel magic* (4th rank; counteract DC 24) to counteract the visions

Glimpse Manifold Realities ↷ (mental, visual) **Trigger** An intelligent creature enters the area; **Effect** The trap deals 4d8+18 mental damage to all intelligent creatures who can perceive the visions (DC 26 basic Will save). Creatures who critically fail additionally lose themself in the visions, becoming confused for 1d4 rounds.

Reset 1 day

COMPLEX HAZARDS

Complex hazards function similarly to monsters during encounters, as they roll initiative and have actions of their own, though these are usually automated in a routine. Complex hazards can be used in encounters to take the place of a creature of the same level and are worth XP (page 57).

COLLAPSING BUILDING HAZARD 14

COMPLEX | ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth +28 (expert)

Description A building collapses, harming everyone inside.

Disable DC 38 Arcana (expert) or Nature (expert) to magically prop up the building, DC 34 Crafting (master) or Survival (master) to stabilize the building, DC 38 Religion (expert) to pray for the collapse to cease; four total successes are required to stop the collapse

Shudder ↷ Trigger An effect damages the building, or the ground around the building shifts; **Effect** The building shudders and creaks, signaling an imminent collapse. The building's interior becomes difficult terrain. The trap rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) The building begins to collapse. All creatures in the building take 3d10+18 bludgeoning damage (DC 39 basic Reflex save). A creature that critically fails its save is additionally knocked prone and takes 1d6 persistent bleed damage.

DEADLY VIDGAME HAZARD 4

COMPLEX | TECH | TRAP

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description A hyperrealistic vidgame pulls players into a virtual world, transforming them into pixelated avatars and pitting them against deadly challenges.

Disable DC 22 Computers (trained) to reprogram the game, or DC 22 Thievery (trained) to exploit a glitch, or DC 17 Vidgame Lore (trained) to beat the game; four total successes are required to disable the trap

New Game ↷ Trigger A creature begins to play the vidgame; **Effect** The trap attempts to pull all players into the vidgame. Each player must attempt a DC 25 Will save. The trap then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and can play the game from the safety of reality.

Success The creature is pulled into the game for 1 round, then immediately escapes the game, returning to reality.

Failure The creature is pulled into the game and can't escape the game until the trap is disabled.

Critical Failure The creature is pulled into the game and can't escape the game until the trap is disabled. Unfortunately, it's playing on hard mode, and it treats the DC of the trap's routine as 2 higher.

Routine (1 action) The trap presents the game's players with deadly challenges as 1 action. Each creature inside the game takes 2d8+5 slashing damage (DC 21 basic Reflex save). A creature can attempt a Vidgame Lore check in place of their saving throw, if desired.

Auto-Save If the vidgame console is turned off, all creatures inside the vidgame remain inside the vidgame and are temporarily removed from reality. If the vidgame console is turned back on, these creatures continue the game where they left off.

Reset The trap resets after 1 hour.

DISINTEGRATION CHAMBER HAZARD 8

COMPLEX | MECHANICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth +16 (expert) or DC 31 (expert) to notice the control panel

Description When sensors detect movement in the trapped room, the doors seal shut, and four wall apertures open, releasing disintegrating nanites into the room.

Disable DC 22 Crafting (trained) or Thievery (trained) on the control panel to deactivate the trap, or DC 24 Computers (trained) to reprogram the control panel

AC 27; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +13

Control Panel Hardness 15; **Control Panel HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Nanite Release ↷ Trigger A creature enters the room or ends its turn in the room; **Effect** The trap makes a nanite Strike against the triggering creature, then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) The trap launches nanites against every creature in the room as 1 action. Because it launches nanites continuously, the trap can also use the Nanite Swarm free

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UPGRADED SUMMONING RUNES

You can make a *summoning rune* of nearly any level. It summons a creature of a level equal to the trap's level. Use the DCs by Level table on page 53 to determine the Thievery DC and spell DC, using the trap's level and applying a hard adjustment (+2). The Stealth modifier for the trap is equal to this number – 10. Stronger *summoning runes* usually require expert proficiency or better in Perception to find, and they might require a higher proficiency rank in Thievery to disable.

action (see below) to launch nanites at each creature during that creature's turn.

Ranged nanite +20, **Damage** 1d10+5 acid; no multiple attack penalty

Nanite Swarm ◆ **Trigger** A creature within the room ends its turn; **Effect** The trap makes a nanite Strike against the triggering creature.

Reset The trap deactivates and resets after 1 minute.

DISTRACTING HOLO AD — HAZARD 1

COMPLEX | MAGICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth +7 (trained), or DC 20 (expert) to notice the holoprojector, or *detect magic*

Description Colorful, lifelike figures flit in and out of a holographic advertisement in a barrage of pleasant sounds and sensations, enticing passersby to spend their credits. The hologram's source is a nearby projector.

Disable DC 17 Computers (trained) to deactivate the ad, or DC 20 Crafting (trained) or Thievery (trained) to disable the projector

Projector AC 16; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +11

Projector Hardness 5; **Projector HP** 24 (BT 12); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Buy! Buy! Buy! ↻ (incapacitation, mental) **Trigger** A creature in the area finishes an action; **Effect** The trap launches a targeted ad enticing viewers to spend credits on a product or service. All creatures within 30 feet who can see, hear, or sense the ad must attempt a DC 17 Will save. The trap rolls initiative.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is dazzled.

Failure The target is dazzled and slowed 1.

Critical Failure The target is fascinated for 1 round and can't take any actions except to access the nearest computer or comm unit and make purchases as directed by the ad.

Routine (1 action) The hazard plays a new ad each round, forcing all creatures that can sense it to attempt a new save.

Reset The trap deactivates and resets after 1 minute.

ELECTRIC FENCE — HAZARD 3

COMPLEX | MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth +10 (trained)

Description A 15-foot-tall electrified fence electrocutes anyone who touches it.

Disable DC 17 Crafting (trained) to ground a 10-foot portion of the fence, or DC 18 Thievery (trained) to cut power to the fence

AC 16; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +6

Hardness 10; **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Shock ◆ **Trigger** A creature touches the fence directly or with a tool; **Effect** The trap deals 1d10 electricity damage to the triggering creature. The trap rolls initiative if it hasn't already.

Routine (1 action) The trap electrocutes each creature touching the fence directly or with a tool, dealing 1d10 electricity damage (DC 23 basic Fortitude save).

HACKER'S FOLLY — HAZARD 2

COMPLEX | HAUNT | TECH

Stealth +15 (trained)

Description A ghostly hacker haunts their computer and attempts to drain the spirit of anyone who accessed the computer.

Disable DC 16 Computers (trained) to partition the haunted code, or DC 18 Religion (trained) or Occultism (trained) to exorcise the spirit

Computer AC 15; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5

Computer Hardness 2; **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage



Quantum Clone

Hacker's Fixation ↻ (mental, visual) **Trigger** A creature touches the console directly or with a tool; **Effect** The haunt distracts the user with colorful graphics and interesting data while lowering their mental defenses. The triggering creature must attempt a DC 22 Will save. The trap then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is stupefied 1 for 1 round.

Failure The creature is stupefied 1.

Critical Failure The creature is stupefied 2. Additionally, they are fascinated with the computer and can't take any actions except to passively view the data on the computer. At the end of each of their turns, they can retry this saving throw to remove the fascinated condition.

Routine (1 action) The haunt absorbs the spirits of the living, dealing 1d10+4 spirit damage to all living creatures within 10 feet of the computer (DC 18 basic Will save). On a critical failure, a creature is additionally drained 1. This routine doesn't count as a hostile action for the purposes of ending the fascinated condition.

Reset The trap resets after 1 hour.

HAYWIRE AUTOPILOT — HAZARD 9

COMPLEX | TECH

Stealth +20 (expert)

Description A hovercar's autopilot goes haywire, causing it to run over nearby creatures.

Disable DC 26 Computers (expert) to remotely reprogram the autopilot, or DC 24 Piloting or Thievery (expert) to override the autopilot while aboard the car; three total successes are required to disable the trap; DC 23 Acrobatics or Athletics to board the car (boarding doesn't disable the trap)

AC 28; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +21

Hardness 16; **HP** 70 (BT 35); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Ram ↻ **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the hovercar; **Effect** The hovercar drives 30 feet in a straight line, dealing 2d10+13 bludgeoning damage to all creatures in the area it passes through (DC 32 basic Reflex save). Creatures damaged by the car are additionally knocked prone. The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The trap loses 1 action each turn for each successful disable. The hovercar uses 1 action to drive 30 feet in a straight line, three times, changing direction between actions as desired. Creatures in the area the hovercar passes through take 2d10+13 bludgeoning damage (DC 32 basic Reflex save). Creatures damaged by the car are additionally knocked prone.

LASER TURRET — HAZARD 1

COMPLEX | MECHANICAL | TECH | TRAP

Stealth +10 (trained)

Description A concealed turret pops up and fires a laser when intruders enter a secure area.

Disable DC 18 Computers (trained) to reprogram the turret, or DC 17 Crafting (trained) to cut power to the turret, or DC 16 Thievery (trained) to disable the turret

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +4

Hardness 5; **HP** 24 (BT 12); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Laser Blast ↻ **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the turret; **Effect** The trap makes a laser Strike against the creature; the trap rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The trap makes a laser Strike against up to three creatures in range, or multiple Strikes against one creature in range if it has no additional targets.

Ranged laser +9 (range increment 90 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 fire

Reset The trap resets after 1 minute.

QUANTUM CLONE — HAZARD 16

COMPLEX | MAGICAL

Stealth +32 (expert)

Description Quantum particles form an exact copy of a creature that can mimic its actions, speech, and thoughts with eerie perfection.

Disable DC 42 Intimidation (master) to frighten the clone away, or DC 42 Diplomacy (master) to reach an accord with the clone, or DC 45 Arcana (master) or Nature (master) to disperse the quantum particles; three total successes are required to disable the trap

Materialize ↻ **Trigger** A creature touches the quantum particles; **Effect** The quantum particles materialize a perfect copy of the triggering creature. The quantum clone is visually identical to the creature and mimics the creature's actions and speech until it has time to observe and learn the creature's patterns well enough to act entirely on its own, a process that takes 1 minute. The quantum clone materializes with no weapons or equipment but can use unarmed Strikes if the creature has them. The quantum clone rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The quantum clone observes the triggering creature and mimics the creature's behavior, taking hostile actions as soon as it takes damage. For the first 2 rounds, the quantum clone takes actions in the exact order the triggering creature did, but in the following rounds, it acts tactically, using actions and reactions it observed the creature using in any order.

Mimic ◆ to ◆◆◆ The quantum clone mimics an action it's observed the triggering creature take, including class abilities, movements, spells, and speech. It attacks on its initiative, using the same statistics as the original creature.

REACTOR MELTDOWN — HAZARD 19

COMPLEX | TECH | TRAP

Stealth +27

Description A nuclear reactor overloads, then explodes.

Disable DC 45 Computers (master) or Crafting (master) to initiate shutdown procedures, or DC 47 Thievery (master) to vent the reactor; three total successes are required to disable the trap

Radiation Leak ↻ **Trigger** A creature views the reactor's sensors or console; **Effect** Creatures within 60 feet of the reactor are exposed to incredible radiation (DC 32 Fortitude; page 91). The trap rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) As the reactor overheats, the trap deals 4d10+20 fire damage to creatures within 60 feet (DC 42

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basic Fortitude save). All creatures in the area are exposed to incredible radiation.

Each time the trap uses this routine, the area increases by 10 feet. When the routine's radius equals 100 feet, resolve the routine. Then, the reactor immediately explodes, using Nuclear Explosion.

Nuclear Explosion ◈ **Trigger** The trap completed its routine with a radius of 100 feet; **Effect** The reactor explodes, dealing 4d10+20 fire damage in a 500 foot radius, bypassing the hardness of any items in the blast zone (DC 46 basic Fortitude save). Everything in the area is exposed to incredible radiation. The area of the nuclear explosion becomes irradiated, leaking severe radiation for 50 years.

REALITY GEYSER — HAZARD 7

COMPLEX | ENVIRONMENTAL | MAGICAL

Stealth +17 (expert)

Description A tear in reality emits a chaotic churn of energy into the air like a geyser, raining destruction down on an area.

Disable DC 27 Arcana (expert) to diffuse the magical energy, or DC 25 Nature (expert) to seal the tear, or DC 30 Survival (trained) to coax the earth back together

Tear Reality ↷ **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the dormant tear; **Effect** A tear opens in reality, gouging a 5-foot radius hole in the earth. The trap rolls initiative.

Routine (2 actions) A chaotic churn of energy blasts out of the tear, dealing 2d10+5 acid damage to all creatures in a 30-foot-tall cylinder centered on the tear (DC 25 basic Reflex save). Creatures damaged by this energy are additionally pushed 10 feet into the air (20 feet on a critical failure). This dispersed energy then rains down, dealing 1d10 fire damage to all creatures within 60 feet of the tear (DC 23 basic Fortitude save).

SENTRY TURRET — HAZARD 5

COMPLEX | MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth +13 (trained)

Description A mechanized turret attacks intruders.

Disable DC 20 Computers (trained) to reprogram the turret, or DC 19 Crafting (trained) to cut power to the turret, or DC 18 Thievery (trained) to disable the turret

AC 19; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +9

Hardness 12; **HP** 54 (BT 26); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage



Sentry Turret

Open Fire ↷ **Trigger** A creature moves within 30 feet of the turret or attacks the turret; **Effect** The turret makes a ranged Strike against the triggering creature; the trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The trap makes three oversized machine gun Strikes against a creature in range, or the trap makes an Auto-Fire attack followed by one Strike against a creature in range.

Ranged oversized machine gun +15 (analog, automatic, range increment 90 feet), **Damage** 2d8+7 piercing

Auto-Fire oversized machine gun (analog, 45-foot cone), **Damage** 2d8+7 piercing (DC 22 basic Reflex save)

Reset The trap resets after 1 minute.

SUMMONING RUNE — HAZARD 1

COMPLEX | MAGICAL | TRAP

Stealth +7 (trained)

Description A cloud of invisible magical sensors in a 10-foot radius surrounds an invisible rune on the wall or floor the size of the creature to be summoned.

Disable DC 15 Acrobatics to approach without triggering the trap followed by DC 17 Thievery (trained) to erase the rune, or *dispel magic* (1st rank; counteract DC 15) to counteract the rune

Summon Monster ↷ (arcane) **Trigger** A creature enters the cloud of magical sensors; **Effect** This trap summons a specific 1st-level creature, determined when the trap is created. The creature rolls initiative and remains for 2d6 rounds, after which the spell ends and the creature disappears. The creature also disappears if someone disables the trap before the duration expires. The summoned creature can use 3 actions each round and can use reactions, unlike most summoned creatures.

Reset The trap resets each day at dawn.

TRASH COMPACTOR — HAZARD 6

COMPLEX | MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth +21 (trained)

Description When activated, the automated trash compactor slowly crushes everything inside it.

Disable DC 26 Crafting (expert) to jam the crushing mechanism, or DC 24 Thievery (expert) to deactivate the trap; DC 28 Athletics (trained) to Force Open the door (this doesn't disable the trap)

Door AC 21; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11

Door Hardness 12; **HP** 54 (BT 27); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Commence Crushing ↷ **Trigger** Two or more creatures end their turn in the room; **Effect** The doors slam shut, sealing the room. The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) Two of the room's walls move 5 feet toward the center of the room, automatically pushing any creatures in those spaces 5 feet closer to the room's center and dealing 2d8+9 bludgeoning damage to all creatures in the room (DC 24 basic Fortitude save). Creatures that die from this damage are crushed to a fine paste.

Reset The trap deactivates and resets after 1 minute.

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You can build hazards to match your adventure's needs and to surprise your players at every turn. This guide presents the information in the typical order for a hazard stat block.

CONCEPT

The first thing you'll need is a concept for your hazard. What level is your hazard? Will it be simple or complex? Is it a trap, a haunt, an environmental hazard, or something else? If it's a trap, is it mechanical, magical, tech, or all of the above? This is a good time to consider the hazard's description and how to disable it.

HAZARD TYPES

The three main types of hazards are traps, environmental hazards, and haunts.

Traps are usually built or placed. They can also form accidentally, such as if a rift opens in time or between realities, or a vehicle's autopilot malfunctions. Mechanical traps always have some physical component, whereas purely magical traps typically don't. Magical traps can usually be counteracted by *dispel magic*, and those without a listed proficiency rank for Stealth can be found using *detect magic*. Tech traps can be affected by the glitching condition but never lose actions.

Environmental hazards might be living things, like spores and molds, or features of the terrain or environment, like rockslides. Some environmental hazards can't reasonably be attacked or damaged, such as a cloud of poisonous gas.

Haunts are usually formed when the spiritual essence of a location is imprinted with instincts and emotions from a living being's demise. Haunts lack matter, so they rarely involve a physical component, or they are incorporeal or might even be damaged only by vitality energy. Typically, PCs can learn clues to determine what it would take to lay a haunt to rest permanently.

UNDERSTANDING AND CHOOSING STATISTICS

Statistics determine how your hazard interacts with the game world, representing how dangerous it is and how hard it is to render harmless or circumvent. The statistics for your hazard can have extreme, high, or low values. You'll want to choose the value that's most appropriate for the concept of your hazard while ensuring that it's well balanced to ensure a fun encounter.

Extreme: The hazard is world-class in this statistic and can challenge almost any character. Almost all hazards have one extreme statistic because hazards normally activate only if they've gone unnoticed or if someone critically failed to disable them. Does it have an extreme Stealth DC that makes it incredibly hard to find, an extreme Disable DC that makes it perilous to disable, or an extreme save DC that makes it deadly in the event it triggers? These are the most common choices, as each affects a different phase of encountering the hazard.

High: Extremely capable but not world-class, the hazard presents a challenge for most characters. This is a capable level and can generally serve as a baseline value.

Low: If a hazard has a weakness, like a poor Reflex save for a bulky mechanical trap or an easy DC to disable for a hard-to-find trap, it usually has a low value. If you need something even lower, use a terrible value from Building Creatures (pages 116–130), or just an incredibly low value.

STEALTH AND DISABLE

When determining a hazard's combat statistics, first decide how the hazard can be located and how hard it is to disable. A hazard where the main challenge is how difficult it is to find, like memory crystals, might have a very different effect for its level than a hazard out in plain sight, daring a PC to try to disable it, like the laser turret or the monument to the Devourer.

STEALTH AND DISABLE DCS

Level	Extreme	High	Low
–1	18	15	12 to 11
0	19	16	13 to 12
1	20	17	14 to 13
2	21	18	15 to 14
3	23	20	17 to 15
4	25	22	18 to 17
5	26	23	20 to 18
6	28	25	21 to 19
7	30	27	23 to 21
8	31	28	24 to 22
9	33	30	26 to 23
10	35	32	27 to 25
11	36	33	29 to 26
12	38	35	30 to 27
13	40	37	32 to 29
14	41	38	33 to 30
15	43	40	35 to 31
16	45	42	36 to 33
17	46	43	38 to 34
18	48	45	39 to 35
19	50	47	41 to 37
20	51	48	42 to 38
21	53	50	44 to 39
22	55	52	45 to 41
23	56	53	46 to 42
24	58	55	48 to 43

When deciding how your hazard is disabled, come up with a narrative description of how it would happen, which will inform which methods and skills disable the hazard. You'll need to decide the proficiency rank necessary to find the hazard as well as disable it with each method. Remember, a hazard without a listed rank next to its Stealth DC is obvious enough that creatures can find it without Searching, and magical hazards without a listed rank aren't normally protected against *detect magic*. Most hazards built by intelligent creatures are concealed and have at least a trained rank. The Minimum Proficiency table indicates the high and moderate proficiency requirements by level; you can use lower proficiency ranks than the ones listed, and if you use the high rank, consider a secondary, perhaps less-efficient method to disable the hazard using a lower rank. For instance, the exploding egg sac environmental hazard (page 106) can be disabled with expert Survival, or by a higher DC with trained Nature.

If you need a Stealth modifier for a complex hazard, just subtract 10 from the listed DC.

MINIMUM PROFICIENCY

Levels	High	Moderate
0 or lower	Untrained	Untrained
1–4	Trained (expert for Perception)	Trained
5–8	Expert	Trained
9–18	Master	Expert
19 or higher	Legendary	Master

DEFENSES

If there's a physical component that a character could break, you'll need to determine the hazard's AC, Fortitude save, and Reflex save, using the extreme, high, and low values (preceded by E, H, or L on the Hazard Defenses table on page 115) as well as its Hardness, HP, and Broken Threshold (BT). When building a purely magical or formless hazard, you can skip this section.

Some hazards, even high-level ones, don't make sense with a high Hardness value. In those cases, you can skip the Hardness and use the HP values from the Hit Points table on page 123. Especially for complex hazards, you might want to divide the durability over multiple sections, located in different positions, to encourage teamwork and mobility.

OFFENSE

Almost all hazards need an attack bonus or a save DC, and hazards that deal damage need to list a damage value. Simple hazards deal about twice as much damage as complex hazards and have a very high attack bonus (abbreviated as S. Atk in the Hazard Offense table on page 115). Complex hazards usually have more moderate attack bonuses (abbreviated as C. Atk in the table). You can adjust them further using the Strike Attack Bonus table on page 124 if your hazard needs it. Simple hazard DCs aren't as high for their level as their attack bonuses are since effects with DCs usually have some effect even on a successful saving throw; use the EDC and HDC columns for extreme and hard DCs in the table.

The damage columns on the table give a damage expression you can use, followed by the average damage in parentheses. If you want to make your own damage expression, remember that average damage is 2.5 for a d4, 3.5 for a d6, 4.5 for a d8, 5.5 for a d10, and 6.5 for a d12.

DESIGNING SIMPLE HAZARDS

When designing a simple hazard, make sure to select an appropriate trigger and effect. Often, a simple hazard that merely damages its target is little more than a speed bump that slows down the game without much added value, so think about the purpose of your hazard carefully, both in the story and in the game world, especially when it's a hazard that a creature intentionally built or placed in that location. A great simple hazard does something interesting, has a longer-lasting consequence, or integrates with the nearby inhabitants or encounters in some way (as discussed on page 78).

DESIGNING COMPLEX HAZARDS

Unlike a simple hazard, a complex hazard can play the part of a creature in a battle or can be an encounter all its own. Many of the concerns with damaging effects when designing a simple hazard don't apply when designing a complex hazard. A complex hazard can deal its damage over and over again and isn't intended to be quick to overcome.

A good complex hazard often requires disabling multiple components or otherwise interacting with the encounter in some way. For instance, while the haywire autopilot (page 111) can be remotely reprogrammed with a challenging Computers check, characters who want to use Piloting or Thievery to override the autopilot will first need to board the vehicle using Acrobatics or Athletics.

BUILDING ROUTINES

A complex hazard has a routine each round, whether it stems from preprogrammed instructions built into a trap, instincts and residual emotions swirling around a complex haunt, or a natural phenomenon like mutation fog. Build a routine that makes sense for the hazard; a chute that ejects lava into the area each round shouldn't be able to precisely target only the PCs, but it might spatter random areas within range or everything within range, depending on how you describe the hazard. However, a complex haunt might be able to recognize and target only living creatures.

If you create a hazard that can't consistently attack the PCs (such as an electric fence, which only damages creatures touching the fence), it can be deadlier than normal in other ways.

The hazard should have as many actions as you feel it needs to perform its routine. If you split the routine out into several actions, you can also remove some of the hazard's actions once partial progress is made in disabling or destroying it; this can give the PCs a feeling of progress, and it can encourage them to handle the hazard if it appears in an encounter alongside creatures.

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HAZARD DEFENSES

Level	EAC	HAC	LAC	E Save	H Save	L Save	Hardness	HP*
–1	18	15	12	+9	+8	+2	2–4	11–13
0	19	16	13	+10	+9	+3	3–5	15–17
1	19	16	13	+11	+10	+4	5–7	23–25
2	21	18	15	+12	+11	+5	7–9	30–34
3	22	19	16	+14	+12	+6	10–12	42–46
4	24	21	18	+15	+14	+8	11–13	46–50
5	25	22	19	+17	+15	+9	12–14	50–54
6	27	24	21	+18	+17	+11	13–15	54–58
7	28	25	22	+20	+18	+12	14–16	58–62
8	30	27	24	+21	+19	+13	15–17	62–66
9	31	28	25	+23	+21	+15	16–18	66–70
10	33	30	27	+24	+22	+16	17–19	70–74
11	34	31	28	+26	+24	+18	19–21	78–82
12	36	33	30	+27	+25	+19	20–22	82–86
13	37	34	31	+29	+26	+20	21–23	86–90
14	39	36	33	+30	+28	+22	22–24	90–94
15	40	37	34	+32	+29	+23	23–25	94–98
16	42	39	36	+33	+30	+25	25–27	101–107
17	43	40	37	+35	+32	+26	27–29	109–115
18	45	42	39	+36	+33	+27	29–31	117–123
19	46	43	40	+38	+35	+29	31–33	125–131
20	48	45	42	+39	+36	+30	33–35	133–139
21	49	46	43	+41	+38	+32	36–38	144–152
22	51	48	45	+43	+39	+33	39–41	156–164
23	52	49	46	+44	+40	+34	44–46	168–176
24	54	51	48	+46	+42	+36	46–50	180–188

* The Broken Threshold is usually half the hazard's HP.

HAZARD OFFENSE

Level	S. Atk	C. Atk	Simple Dmg	Complex Dmg	EDC	HDC
–1	+10	+8	2d4+1 (6)	1d4+1 (3)	19	16
0	+11	+8	2d6+3 (10)	1d6+2 (5)	19	16
1	+13	+9	2d6+5 (12)	1d6+3 (6)	20	17
2	+14	+11	2d10+7 (18)	1d10+4 (9)	22	18
3	+16	+12	2d10+13 (24)	1d10+6 (12)	23	20
4	+17	+14	4d8+10 (28)	2d8+5 (14)	25	21
5	+19	+15	4d8+14 (32)	2d8+7 (16)	26	22
6	+20	+17	4d8+18 (36)	2d8+9 (18)	27	24
7	+22	+18	4d10+18 (40)	2d10+9 (20)	29	25
8	+23	+20	4d10+22 (44)	2d10+11 (22)	30	26
9	+25	+21	4d10+26 (48)	2d10+13 (24)	32	28
10	+26	+23	4d12+26 (52)	2d12+13 (26)	33	29
11	+28	+24	4d12+30 (56)	2d12+15 (28)	34	30
12	+29	+26	6d10+27 (60)	3d10+14 (30)	36	32
13	+31	+27	6d10+31 (64)	3d10+16 (32)	37	33
14	+32	+29	6d10+35 (68)	3d10+18 (34)	39	34
15	+34	+30	6d12+33 (72)	3d12+17 (36)	40	36
16	+35	+32	6d12+35 (74)	3d12+18 (37)	41	37
17	+37	+33	6d12+37 (76)	3d12+19 (38)	43	38
18	+38	+35	6d12+41 (80)	3d12+20 (40)	44	40
19	+40	+36	8d10+40 (84)	4d10+20 (42)	46	41
20	+41	+38	8d10+44 (88)	4d10+22 (44)	47	42
21	+43	+39	8d10+48 (92)	4d10+24 (46)	48	44
22	+44	+41	8d10+52 (96)	4d10+26 (48)	50	45
23	+46	+42	8d12+48 (100)	4d12+24 (50)	51	46
24	+47	+44	8d12+52 (104)	4d12+26 (52)	52	48

BUILDING CREATURES

Making your own creatures fleshes out your game world and lets you introduce concepts not yet available in published products like *Alien Core* and similar volumes. These guidelines help you customize creatures to your specifications and explore your imagination. From alien monsters to corporate masterminds, you have the power to design creatures that fit the narrative needs of your story.

Creatures aren't built the same way PCs are. The rules for building them are more flexible, and their statistics are based on benchmark final numbers rather than combining each individual modifier together. This is called top-down design, in which you consider the design process as a whole and select the details that reflect your intended result, rather than building statistics from the bottom up and hoping the finished creature matches your vision.

This guide provides a step-by-step process to build creatures, but as you get more comfortable with creature creation, you might prefer to use different methods. You could start with one ability you think is cool, or you might look to create a spellcaster of a certain type. There's no wrong starting place or wrong way to compile and present your creation; some GMs prefer to generate a stat block that's as similar to an official *Alien Core* entry as possible, while others prefer just a brief set of notes.

DEVELOP THE CONCEPT

To begin, come up with the creature's concept. You likely already have the basic idea. As you add details to the general idea, taking notes can help keep your creature on track. Consider the parts of your creature you find most compelling and want to emphasize when the creature hits the table. For example, in *Alien Core*, typodaemons thrive on the subtle destruction wrought by their mischief and become sickened if you point out their intentional errors. Tax collector robots relentlessly pursue their targets but can be placated by paying a fine, as represented by their centerpiece ability, tax collector. Note your creature's core aspects, and if you feel uncertain later, you can look back and ask yourself, "Does this emphasize a core aspect or not?"

Next, look at the creature's role in your game. Is it meant to be a combatant? A social creature? A trusted ally? Figuring this out will help you determine whether to give it strong combat abilities or to focus on skills, spells, and special abilities. Think about how the creature might behave if it's in a fight, if someone tries to talk to it, or if it's in a social situation. Does it work better alone or with allies? What sort of character should be best at facing it or be particularly weak against it?

Also consider the complexity of the creature. This matters most when you plan to use a large number of creatures of that type. If you'll use five at the same time, you'll want their turns to move swiftly and avoid complex special actions. A creature that's likely to face a group of PCs alone can have more abilities, and it might need a more versatile set of defenses against PC tactics. Cut complexity as much as you can while retaining your desired theme.

Now, how do you want an encounter with this creature to feel? Should it be scary? Mobile? Confusing? A mystical duel or a knockdown, drag-out fight? What can you give your creature to convey those characteristics? Much of this feel will come from your choice of the creature's special abilities or spells, rather than its raw numbers.

With all this in mind, think about what specific abilities your creature should have. Take a few notes now, and get to the details later. You can use abilities from *Alien Core* or feats in *Player Core*, adjusting as needed, to save yourself time. It helps to think of a creature that's similar to yours and see what makes it tick—and what you can steal from it. Maybe you can just reskin that creature (page 118), instead of making a new one from scratch.

Now that you understand your creature's concept, it's time to get to the statistics. Remember that you can always change your concept later on. Your creation might evolve and transform as you go, so be open to change.

UNDERSTANDING STATISTICS

Most of the statistics in this section use a scale of extreme, high, moderate, and low—some use terrible values as well.

Extreme: The creature is world-class in this statistic and can challenge almost any character. Most creatures have no extreme statistics or only one extreme statistic, although some creatures might have additional extreme statistics and weaker related statistics elsewhere (a common example being a creature trading accuracy for extreme damage). Examples from *Alien Core* include the zitteroc's Athletics modifier and the necrovite's spell DC.

High: Extremely capable but not world-class, the creature presents a challenge for most characters. Just about all creatures have at least one high value. Most combat-focused creatures have high AC and either a high attack bonus and high damage, or a merely moderate attack bonus but extreme damage. A cerebinite's attack bonus and a heliad nymph's Diplomacy modifier are high values.

Moderate: A middle-of-the road statistic covers anything unremarkable about the creature. Use this one often.

Low: The creature is actively bad at this. Choose these intentionally to represent the creature's weak points. Most creatures should have at least one low statistic; an example is the warp troll's Will save.

Terrible: Some statistics can dip even lower than low, to terrible. This indicates a truly awful statistic that still isn't game-breakingly bad. A tech zombie's Intelligence is terrible, as is a void ooze's Reflex save.

PUSH AND PULL

Statistics should be balanced overall. That means if you're giving a creature an extreme statistic, it should have some low or terrible statistics to compensate. For example, if you were making a creature extremely hard to hit by giving it an extreme AC, you'd likely give it lower saving throws or low HP. If a creature is great at spellcasting, it might need several low statistics to be a balanced challenge. There's no perfect system for making these decisions. If you've made a creature that has four high stats and nothing low, or vice versa, take another look. A creature's strengths and weaknesses change the PCs' strategies for dealing with it, and that's what makes playing the game fun!

EXTREME INCREASES

At the higher levels of the game, PCs have more tools at their disposal, so the creatures they face need to hit back harder! At higher levels, give each creature more extreme statistics. Having one extreme statistic becomes typical around 11th level. A creature of 15th level or higher typically has two extreme statistics, and one of 20th level or higher should have three or four. Keep in mind that these should be relevant to the encounters you expect them to have–extreme social skills aren't much use to a combat-focused creature. Be careful about giving multiple extreme statistics that are closely linked: a creature with extreme damage and Fortitude saves is one thing, but having an extreme attack bonus and extreme damage allows the creature to apply both extreme statistics to each attack.

LEVEL

For most creatures you build, their level depends on the level of the party that will encounter it. Look at other creatures you think are similar in power to yours to determine its level. Note that level represents a creature's combat ability, so a creature that's more social might have 3rd-level combat statistics and 6th-level skills, but it would remain a 3rd-level creature. Most such creatures are NPCs; for more information on this distinction and how to use it, see Non-Combat Level on page 132.

Some abilities are hard for PCs to deal with at low levels. For instance, creatures with an extreme AC at lower levels can make for frustrating foes that require exceptionally high rolls to hit. Natural invisibility or at-will *invisibility* as an innate spell should come at around 6th level, when PCs are more likely to prepare *see the unseen* in lower-rank spell slots, or 8th level, when some PCs get access to the *truesight sight*.

The tables in this chapter go up to 24th level, the highest-level extreme encounter a party might face.

BUILDING CREATURES OVERVIEW

This section details the creature-building process using the following steps.

1. **Develop the Concept** (page 116) Think about your creature, and make notes you can use in future steps.
2. **Build the Stat Block** Pick all the statistics for the creatures, going through the list below.
   - Level (page 117)
   - Size and Traits (page 117)
   - Attribute Modifiers (page 118)
   - Perception and Senses (page 118)
   - Languages (page 119)
   - Skills (page 119)
   - Items, if necessary (page 120)
   - AC (page 121)
   - Saving Throws (page 122)
   - Hit Points (page 122)
   - Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances (page 123)
   - Speed (page 124)
   - Strikes, including their damage (page 124)
   - Spells, if necessary (page 125)
3. **Design Abilities** (page 127) Create the special abilities your creature can use.
4. **Review Holistically** (page 130) Step back, take stock of your creature as a whole, and tweak as needed.

TRAIT ABILITIES (PAGE 130)

This section provides the abilities conveyed by certain traits, such as dragon, robot, and undead. You'll also find abilities typical of creatures with those traits to help guide you as you plan your creatures.

BUILDING NPCS (PAGE 132)

Sometimes you'll design a creature that's meant to have abilities or characteristics similar to those of a PC. Maybe you need a fashionable envoy, a cunning operative assassin, or a wise mystic for your game. You also might need a common construction worker, who has little combat ability but great skill with tools and heavy machinery. This section provides ways you might modify aspects of the creature-building process to fit those needs.

SIZE AND TRAITS

Fill out the trait line of your creature's stat block. Creatures can be whatever size you need them to be, though you seldom find Large creatures below 1st level, Huge creatures below 5th level, or Gargantuan creatures below 10th level. Generally, you don't automatically adjust statistics for size, except to Strength modifiers for Large and bigger creatures, which you'll find in the following Attribute Modifiers section.

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RESKINNING A CREATURE

Sometimes you need a creature with abilities that are almost exactly the same as those of a published creature. In that case, it can be more efficient to simply "reskin" the old creature rather than design a new one—that is, to change the description but keep the abilities mostly the same. Occasionally, reskinning requires small mechanical adjustments. For instance, an ice squox that has immunity to cold, an aura that deals cold damage, and the ability to freeze people in place with its jaws to deal persistent cold damage and suppress them could be reskinned as a caustic animate tree that has immunity to acid, an aura that deals acid damage, and branch attacks that smear sticky acidic sap on a creature's body when it hits, dealing persistent acid damage and suppressing them.

Your creature will almost certainly have one of the following traits to define its type: aberration, animal, astral, beast, celestial, construct, dragon, elemental, ethereal, fey, fiend, fungus, giant, humanoid, monitor, ooze, plant, robot, or undead. If you're making a creature from an existing category of a type, such as demon, it also has that category as a trait. Creatures with a close affinity to elements—air, earth, fire, metal, water and wood—or types of energy—like acid, cold, and electricity—have those traits.

Some abilities that are typical of creatures with the traits listed here can be found in Trait Abilities on page 130. As with the other steps, looking at similar creatures will give you an idea of what traits to use.

Add any traits that have detailed rules attached to them, like amphibious, aquatic, cosmic, incorporeal, mindless, and swarm. You can add traits related to the creature category, such as kucharn or midwife, but most of these traits are pretty self-evident in play. If at any point you realize during play that you didn't add a trait the creature really should have, you can usually apply it retroactively.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

Next, figure out your creature's attribute modifiers since these will suggest what their other statistics should be. You don't have to determine the exact numbers, but it's good to avoid creating creatures whose attribute modifiers are at odds with their abilities, like creatures with a terrible Wisdom modifier and a very high Perception. Most of the time, you'll just be using attribute modifiers for untrained skills, so they're useful as a guide but not crucial.

The Attribute Modifier Scales table shows some benchmarks for your creatures. Use high for the creature's best attribute modifiers, moderate for ones they're okay at, and low for the rest. If a creature has a truly bad ability, you can go as low as –5. That's the terrible range for attribute modifiers, and doesn't really change by level. This is most common with animals, which have an Intelligence modifier of –4 (for khefaks, laser wolves, rats, and such) or –5 (for more instinctual animals like insects), and for mindless creatures, which have a –5 Intelligence modifier.

Few creatures use the extreme column. A powerful, dedicated spellcaster might use an extreme spellcasting statistic, or a preternaturally charming creature like a nymph might have an extreme Charisma modifier. However, the most common way extreme numbers are used is for really big, really strong creatures. This happens with only Large or bigger creatures from 1st to 5th level, Huge or larger creatures from 6th to 9th level, and Gargantuan creatures from 10th to 15th level. Beyond that level, a creature doesn't gain an extreme Strength modifier from size alone.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER SCALES

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
–1	–	+3	+2	+0
0	–	+3	+2	+0
1	+5	+4	+3	+1
2	+5	+4	+3	+1
3	+5	+4	+3	+1
4	+6	+5	+3	+2
5	+6	+5	+4	+2
6	+7	+5	+4	+2
7	+7	+6	+4	+2
8	+7	+6	+4	+3
9	+7	+6	+4	+3
10	+8	+7	+5	+3
11	+8	+7	+5	+3
12	+8	+7	+5	+4
13	+9	+8	+5	+4
14	+9	+8	+5	+4
15	+9	+8	+6	+4
16	+10	+9	+6	+5
17	+10	+9	+6	+5
18	+10	+9	+6	+5
19	+11	+10	+6	+5
20	+11	+10	+7	+6
21	+11	+10	+7	+6
22	+12	+10	+8	+6
23	+12	+10	+8	+6
24	+13	+12	+9	+7

PERCEPTION

Perception is a fairly straightforward statistic. Use Wisdom as a guide for setting it, and adjust to the high side if your creature has acute senses or extra training. If your creature has low Wisdom, for example, it would probably have a low Perception modifier, or moderate if it's supposed to be a great hunter. Don't make your creature's Perception higher just because it's often

used for initiative; creatures with poor Perception could use a skill check for initiative instead, such as Stealth.

SENSES

Choose or design any special senses for your creature, such as low-light vision, darkvision, or scent. If you're making a sense from scratch, simply decide what it senses, whether it has a range limit, and whether it's precise or imprecise. For example, a ferrofluid ooze has magnetic scent. This means it can sense large sources of magnetic metal within 100 feet, and the sense is precise—about as acute as human vision in daylight.

PERCEPTION

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low	Terrible
–1	+9	+8	+5	+2	+0
0	+10	+9	+6	+3	+1
1	+11	+10	+7	+4	+2
2	+12	+11	+8	+5	+3
3	+14	+12	+9	+6	+4
4	+15	+14	+11	+8	+6
5	+17	+15	+12	+9	+7
6	+18	+17	+14	+11	+8
7	+20	+18	+15	+12	+10
8	+21	+19	+16	+13	+11
9	+23	+21	+18	+15	+12
10	+24	+22	+19	+16	+14
11	+26	+24	+21	+18	+15
12	+27	+25	+22	+19	+16
13	+29	+26	+23	+20	+18
14	+30	+28	+25	+22	+19
15	+32	+29	+26	+23	+20
16	+33	+30	+28	+25	+22
17	+35	+32	+29	+26	+23
18	+36	+33	+30	+27	+24
19	+38	+35	+32	+29	+26
20	+39	+36	+33	+30	+27
21	+41	+38	+35	+32	+28
22	+43	+39	+36	+33	+30
23	+44	+40	+37	+34	+31
24	+46	+42	+38	+36	+32

BASE ROAD MAPS

You can use the following suggestions to set the baseline when creating your road map. For example, use the brute for a big, tough creature like an ogre, and the skirmisher for a darting enemy. Each entry is a starting point you can customize as you see fit. Any core statistic that isn't listed should typically use moderate numbers. You can set attribute modifiers and add additional abilities as needed. To make a creature that resembles a character of a certain class, see Class Road Maps on page 133.

Brute low Perception; high or extreme Str modifier, high to moderate Con modifier, low or lower Dex and mental modifiers; moderate or low AC; high Fortitude, low Reflex or Will or both; high HP; high attack bonus and high damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage

Magical Striker high attack and high damage; moderate to high spell DCs; either a scattering of innate spells, or prepared or spontaneous spells with a rank up to half the creature's level (rounded up) minus 1

Skill Paragon high or extreme attribute modifier matching its best skills; typically high Reflex or Will and low Fortitude; many skills at moderate or high and potentially one or two extreme skills; at least one special ability to use the creature's skills in combat

Skirmisher high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; higher Speed than typical

Sniper high Perception; high Dex modifier; low Fortitude, high Reflex; moderate to low HP; ranged Strikes have high attack bonus and damage or moderate attack bonus and extreme damage (melee Strikes are weaker)

Soldier high Str modifier; high to extreme AC; high Fortitude; high attack bonus and high damage; Reactive Strike or other tactical abilities

Spellcaster high or extreme modifier for the spellcasting attribute; low Fortitude, high Will; low HP; low attack bonus and moderate or low damage; high or extreme spell DCs; prepared or spontaneous spells with a rank of up to half the creature's level (rounded up)

LANGUAGES

Think about what languages the creature would need to communicate with other creatures in its home. For instance, many intelligent undead speak Necril, and many creatures from the Azlanti Star Empire speak Azlanti. If you want your creature to be able to speak to the PCs, be sure it has Common; for a creature with no reason to speak the common tongue of your setting (such as most extraplanar creatures in a typical campaign, or creatures from the Vast), be sure it doesn't. Some creatures can understand language but can't vocalize; in this case, you can state that they can't speak any language. For creatures that need to be able to infiltrate and communicate wherever they go, you might give them a digital translator, *truespeech*, the ability to communicate telepathically, or a similar ability as a constant innate spell.

SKILLS

You have lots of flexibility in setting your creature's skills. Pick some skills you think are appropriate, and consider how good the creature is at them. High skills are roughly on par with a specialized PC of the creature's level, though they could be a

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CONVERTING FIRST EDITION CREATURES

If you're converting creatures from First Edition, you won't find a direct numerical conversion. Instead, use the original statistics to create your road map, giving a better AC to a creature that had a good AC in First Edition, and so on.

Here are the main areas of difference that you'll want to keep in mind for your conversion.

- Attribute modifiers scale differently, so don't copy them exactly. The highest modifiers tend not to get as high in Second Edition. You'll rarely see a +10 Strength modifier, for example. Creatures also tend to get better low statistics at higher levels than they used to, particularly for Dexterity and Wisdom. This is most apparent in high-level First Edition creatures with awful Dexterity.
- Low-Intelligence creatures, particularly animals, tend to have more special actions than they would have in First Edition. This is to make encounters with them more dynamic and distinct. Compare dinosaurs between the editions for good examples.
- When converting spell-like abilities to innate spells, you might need to make some substitutions. Some spells will appear as heightened versions of spells (such as *greater dispel magic* now being heightened *dispel magic*), but others will require you to find something different. Also, don't feel like you need to keep every spell; focus on the most thematic and potent ones. The Spells section on page 125 has more advice on this subject.
- Damage reduction has been replaced with two options: resistance to all damage (possibly with exceptions), or more HP and a weakness. Immunities, Weaknesses, and Resistances on page 123 describes the distinction.
- If you want to convert spell resistance, you can give the creature a +1 status bonus to all saves against magic, or +2 if it had abnormally high spell resistance for its level.

little lower or higher. Most creatures have at least one high skill, but no more than three. The best skills should go with the best attribute modifiers, and you might even want to estimate the creature's proficiency rank for these skills. Some skills can get a high bonus for free to fit the creature's theme, particularly Lore skills.

Most creatures don't have an extreme skill unless they're world-class for their level, like a necrovite's Arcana. Having an extreme skill is less impactful than having an extreme AC or attack bonus, but it still might warrant a sacrifice elsewhere, especially if the creature also has more high skills than usual. There's no need for terrible skill modifiers since an untrained skill usually represents that.

SKILLS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
–1	+8	+5	+4	+2 to +1
0	+9	+6	+5	+3 to +2
1	+10	+7	+6	+4 to +3
2	+11	+8	+7	+5 to +4
3	+13	+10	+9	+7 to +5
4	+15	+12	+10	+8 to +7
5	+16	+13	+12	+10 to +8
6	+18	+15	+13	+11 to +9
7	+20	+17	+15	+13 to +11
8	+21	+18	+16	+14 to +12
9	+23	+20	+18	+16 to +13
10	+25	+22	+19	+17 to +15
11	+26	+23	+21	+19 to +16
12	+28	+25	+22	+20 to +17
13	+30	+27	+24	+22 to +19
14	+31	+28	+25	+23 to +20
15	+33	+30	+27	+25 to +21
16	+35	+32	+28	+26 to +23
17	+36	+33	+30	+28 to +24
18	+38	+35	+31	+29 to +25
19	+40	+37	+33	+31 to +27
20	+41	+38	+34	+32 to +28
21	+43	+40	+36	+34 to +29
22	+45	+42	+37	+35 to +31
23	+46	+43	+38	+36 to +32
24	+48	+45	+40	+38 to +33

SPECIAL MODIFIERS

You can also add special, thematic modifiers for certain skill uses. For instance, you might give a creature that secretes adhesive "Athletics +7 (+9 to Climb or Grab)." This special bonus should still remain at or below the extreme number, especially if it has a combat purpose like the Grab bonus above. You don't need to do this when the skill use is for the skill's primary purpose, such as "Piloting +7 (+9 to Pilot a starship)."

ITEMS

If you gave a creature gear equivalent to a PC, your PCs would gain a huge amount of treasure by defeating a large group of them. Using the Safe Items table can help you avoid that. A creature can have a single permanent item of the listed level without issue. For example, if a 6th-level creature has a tactical doshko, that item isn't worth enough that the PCs would be massively rich if they encountered many creatures of that type and sold everything they found. You can give a creature several lower-level items too. Just pay attention to your overall treasure as measured against the Safe Item table on page 121. At the lowest levels, a creature can certainly have multiple level 0 items, even though normally a creature should

have only one item of the level listed in the Safe Item Level column. You can also give a creature's item the implanted trait if it's attached to its body, making it so the item can't be looted.

Specific creatures or NPCs have more leeway to break these guidelines because you can plan the rest of your adventure's loot around them. Also, giving a boss a powerful magic item makes the fight and its aftermath more interesting.

SAFE ITEMS

Creature Level	Safe Item Level
3 or lower	0
4-5	1
6	2 (tactical weapon)
7	3
8	4 (advanced weapon)
9	5 (tactical armor)
10	6
11	7
12	8 (advanced armor)
13	9
14	10 (superior weapon)
15	11 (superior armor)
16	12 (elite weapon)
17	13
18	14 (elite armor)
19	15
20	16 (ultimate weapon)
21	17
22	18 (ultimate armor)
23	19 (paragon weapon)
24	20 (paragon armor)

DEFENSES

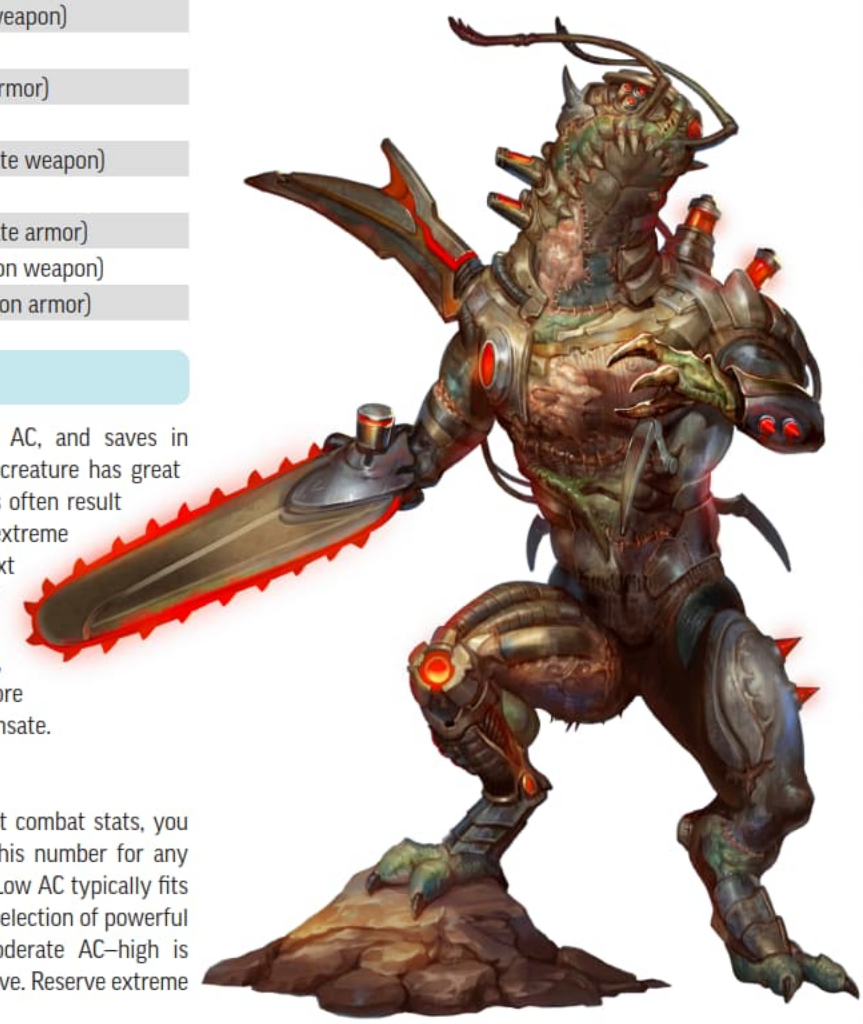
Consider adjusting your creature's HP, AC, and saves in tandem based on its theme. Almost no creature has great defenses in all areas, and such creatures often result in frustrating fights. A creature with extreme AC might mean reducing its HP to the next lowest category, or reducing its HP by a smaller amount and making another reduction elsewhere. On the other hand, a creature that's easy to hit could have more HP and a strong Fortitude save to compensate.

ARMOR CLASS

Because AC is one of the most important combat stats, you need to be more careful when setting this number for any creature you expect to end up in a fight. Low AC typically fits spellcasters, who compensate with their selection of powerful spells. Most creatures use high or moderate AC—high is comparable to what a PC fighter would have. Reserve extreme AC for a creature that's even better defended; these values are for creatures that have defenses similar in power to those of a soldier or other heavily armored character.

IMPROVISING A CREATURE

As you get more experienced, you might find that you don't need to build some creatures in advance. In many cases, especially for simple creatures, you can just select values from the relevant tables on the fly and track its HP. When you do, track which value you used as it came up. For instance, let's say you're improvising a 2nd-level free captain gunner. When it's time for initiative, you decide it has moderate Perception and jot down "Per +8." Your group's fighter beats it at initiative and attacks. You decide the gunner has high AC—looking at the Armor Class table, you see that's 18—and add this information to your note. The fighter's Strike hits, and you select the low end of high HP: 36. Well, now it's 25. Your note says, "Per +8, AC 18, HP 25." If it gets to take a turn, you can give it a Strike then.



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ARMOR CLASS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
-1	18	15	14	12
0	19	16	15	13
1	19	16	15	13
2	21	18	17	15
3	22	19	18	16
4	24	21	20	18
5	25	22	21	19
6	27	24	23	21
7	28	25	24	22
8	30	27	26	24
9	31	28	27	25
10	33	30	29	27
11	34	31	30	28
12	36	33	32	30
13	37	34	33	31
14	39	36	35	33
15	40	37	36	34
16	42	39	38	36
17	43	40	39	37
18	45	42	41	39
19	46	43	42	40
20	48	45	44	42
21	49	46	45	43
22	51	48	47	45
23	52	49	48	46
24	54	51	50	48

SAVING THROWS

You can often set saves quickly by assigning one high, one moderate, and one low modifier. Some creatures might vary from this, either because they have poor AC but better saves or because they should thematically have multiple good saves and compensate elsewhere. You have more flexibility with saves, and having one save be 1 more or 1 less than the listed number is rarely a big deal. Pay attention to the creature's Con, Dex, and Wis modifiers—these don't have to correspond to the creature's saves exactly, but should inform your choices.

Extreme saves often pair with extreme or high attribute modifiers. Almost no creature should have more than one extreme save, even at high levels. Assign terrible saves to creatures that have a clear weak point—for example, a nearly immobile creature would have a terrible Reflex save.

SAVING THROWS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low	Terrible
-1	+9	+8	+5	+2	+0
0	+10	+9	+6	+3	+1
1	+11	+10	+7	+4	+2
2	+12	+11	+8	+5	+3
3	+14	+12	+9	+6	+4
4	+15	+14	+11	+8	+6
5	+17	+15	+12	+9	+7
6	+18	+17	+14	+11	+8
7	+20	+18	+15	+12	+10
8	+21	+19	+16	+13	+11
9	+23	+21	+18	+15	+12
10	+24	+22	+19	+16	+14
11	+26	+24	+21	+18	+15
12	+27	+25	+22	+19	+16
13	+29	+26	+23	+20	+18
14	+30	+28	+25	+22	+19
15	+32	+29	+26	+23	+20
16	+33	+30	+28	+25	+22
17	+35	+32	+29	+26	+23
18	+36	+33	+30	+27	+24
19	+38	+35	+32	+29	+26
20	+39	+36	+33	+30	+27
21	+41	+38	+35	+32	+28
22	+43	+39	+36	+33	+30
23	+44	+40	+37	+34	+31
24	+46	+42	+38	+36	+32

HIT POINTS

Give a creature HP in the moderate range unless its theme strongly suggests it should use another range. Spellcasters, for example, often have low HP. Brutish creatures usually have high HP, compensating with lower AC, weaker saves, fewer tactical options, or other limitations. As mentioned in the Defenses section above, you don't want a creature with extreme AC to have high HP too.

Hit Points are closely tied in with immunities, weaknesses, and resistances, so if your creature has any of those, look at that section before finalizing HP (page 123).

REGENERATION AND HEALING ABILITIES

Your creature might have regeneration, fast healing, or some other ability to heal itself. These healing abilities can greatly affect the flow of a fight. Regeneration or fast healing heals a number of hits each round—usually one to one and a half hits. To determine the number of Hit Points it should restore, look at the high damage value on the Strike Damage table (page 125) and multiply that value by the number of hits healed. For instance, if the high damage is 20, regeneration between 20 to 30 makes sense. The value should be higher if the regeneration is easy to overcome—and remember that most regeneration gets easier to overcome at higher levels. Also, you might want to decrease the creature's total HP by double its regeneration value. Fast healing follows the same rules, but because it can't prevent a creature's death and there isn't always a way to deactivate it, you might want to give the creature more HP instead of fast healing to keep things simple.

If a creature can use an ability that heals it, that ability typically restores more HP since it costs actions. An at-will healing ability should be based on a *heal* spell 2 ranks lower than the highest-rank spell a creature of that level could ordinarily cast (for example, an 11th-level creature can typically cast up to 6th-rank spells, so you would base its healing ability on a 4th-rank *heal* spell). If the ability both deals damage and heals, use that same baseline scale from above but with *vampiric feast* instead of *heal*.

HIT POINTS

Level	High	Moderate	Low
-1	9	8-7	6-5
0	20-17	16-14	13-11
1	26-24	21-19	16-14
2	40-36	32-28	25-21
3	59-53	48-42	37-31
4	78-72	63-57	48-42
5	97-91	78-72	59-53
6	123-115	99-91	75-67
7	148-140	119-111	90-82
8	173-165	139-131	105-97
9	198-190	159-151	120-112
10	223-215	179-171	135-127
11	248-240	199-191	150-142
12	273-265	219-211	165-157
13	298-290	239-231	180-172
14	323-315	259-251	195-187
15	348-340	279-271	210-202
16	373-365	299-291	225-217
17	398-390	319-311	240-232
18	423-415	339-331	255-247
19	448-440	359-351	270-262
20	473-465	379-371	285-277
21	505-495	405-395	305-295
22	544-532	436-424	329-317
23	581-569	466-454	351-339
24	633-617	508-492	383-367

IMMUNITIES, WEAKNESSES, AND RESISTANCES

If it's highly thematic for a creature to have an immunity, weakness, or resistance, consider adding it. The Resistances and Weaknesses table lists the ranges for weaknesses and resistances by level.

Immunities are generally reserved for creatures made of an unusual substance (like a fire elemental being immune to fire). You can also give an immunity if a creature's biology or construction would logically cause it to be unaffected (like a mindless creature's immunity to mental effects).

If the creature should be hard to affect with something but the conditions above aren't true, give it a resistance instead. For instance, most cosmic creatures aren't actually made of ice, so it wouldn't be immune to cold, but its life in space makes it resistant to cold. You'll typically use the lower end of the value on the Resistances and Weaknesses table for a broad resistance that applies to a wide range of effects, like "physical 5 (except silver)" and the higher end for something narrower, like a single damage type. A creature with a resistance, especially a broad resistance or a physical resistance, usually has fewer HP.

Giving your creature a weakness adds flavor to it and greatly rewards effective player tactics once your players identify the weakness. The weakness should apply to one damage type or phenomenon and use the high end of the scale. Creatures typically have at most one weakness. If a creature has a weakness, especially to something common, give it additional HP. The amount of additional HP might depend on how tough the creature should feel if the PCs don't exploit its weakness; a tough creature might have additional HP equal to quadruple the weakness value. A creature with a hard-to-exploit weakness might have additional HP equal to the weakness value or less.

In Starfinder, PCs have access to a wide variety of damage types. A 1st-level character can pack a laser pistol (fire damage), a sonic rifle (sonic damage), or even a neural lash (mental damage). Because of this prevalence of damage type accessibility, resistances and weaknesses can often turn the tide of a battle. Some damage types, like fire or cold, often appear as obvious use cases for resistances and weaknesses. Be sure to vary your creature design to include some that might have mental or sonic resistance as a means of encouraging weapon diversity.

RESISTANCES AND WEAKNESSES

Level	Maximum	Minimum
-1	1	1
0	3	1
1	3	2
2	5	2
3	6	3
4	7	4
5	8	4
6	9	5
7	10	5
8	11	6
9	12	6
10	13	7
11	14	7
12	15	8
13	16	8
14	17	9
15	18	9
16	19	9
17	19	10
18	20	10
19	21	11
20	22	11

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Level	Maximum	Minimum
21	23	12
22	24	12
23	25	13
24	26	13

The combination of more HP and a weakness has a different feel from standard HP with resistances. If the creature being an impervious tank really fits its theme, use a resistance with an exception, such as "physical 5 (except silver)." If, however, it makes more sense for normal hits to get through and the creature to simply have great staying power, use more HP and a weakness. Living hardlight and tech zombies are a good example of the difference between these styles. Living hardlight has resistances because they're holograms and hard to hurt. Tech zombies, on the other hand, have more HP and a weakness to slashing damage—they're tougher, but their bodies aren't built to deflect weapon attacks, and slashing attacks can rip them up quickly.

SPEED

Your creature's Speed should be 25 feet if it moves like a human. Beyond that, you can set the Speed to whatever makes sense. Remember that the creature can move up to triple this number if it spends its whole turn moving, so if you want the PCs to be able to chase the creature, its Speed can be only so high. Most creatures should have a ranged attack, fly Speed, or other way to deal with flying PCs, speedy PCs, and PCs with more efficient actions that let them engage and retreat more easily. This includes creatures converted from Pathfinder, where PCs can only fly at higher levels (see Anachronistic Creatures on page 250 for more information.)

Creatures can have climb and swim Speeds at any level. While you can give your creature a fly Speed at 1st-level, as most PCs should have ranged options available to them, it's better to wait until around 3rd level (when PCs have enough feats to support those ranged attacks and access to items like jump jets and jet packs) to give your creature a fly Speed if it also has ranged attacks or another way to harry the PCs from a distance indefinitely.

STRIKES

When building your creature's selection of Strikes, use the following sections to set the Strike's attack bonus and damage. Give the attack all the normal traits if it's a weapon; for unarmed attacks or weapons you invent, give whatever traits you feel are appropriate. Note that these traits might influence the damage you give the Strike.

You might want to make sure a creature has an unarmed attack if you think it's likely to get disarmed. Creatures should always have access to a ranged strike; even if most PCs can't fly until they get access to jet packs at 5th level, lower-level PCs might still have access to climb Speeds and limited flight options like jump jets much sooner. Some ancestries give innate flight speed too, so it's possible to have a 1st-level PC flying around the battlefield, which means most creatures do need a ranged option or be in an area where flight mobility is limited. Many parties can also pin down melee-only enemies in a way that makes an encounter trivial if the enemies don't have ranged strikes.

STRIKE ATTACK BONUS

Use a high attack bonus for physically combative creatures that also usually have high damage. A creature could have a higher attack bonus and lower damage, or vice versa (for instance, a moderate attack bonus and extreme damage might fit a creature that's more like an operative), instead of having a poor statistic in another category. Spellcasters typically have poor attack bonuses, potentially in exchange for extreme spell DCs.

STRIKE ATTACK BONUS

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
–1	+10	+8	+6	+4
0	+10	+8	+6	+4
1	+11	+9	+7	+5
2	+13	+11	+9	+7
3	+14	+12	+10	+8
4	+16	+14	+12	+9
5	+17	+15	+13	+11
6	+19	+17	+15	+12
7	+20	+18	+16	+13
8	+22	+20	+18	+15
9	+23	+21	+19	+16
10	+25	+23	+21	+17
11	+27	+24	+22	+19
12	+28	+26	+24	+20
13	+29	+27	+25	+21
14	+31	+29	+27	+23
15	+32	+30	+28	+24
16	+34	+32	+30	+25
17	+35	+33	+31	+27
18	+37	+35	+33	+28
19	+38	+36	+34	+29
20	+40	+38	+36	+31
21	+41	+39	+37	+32
22	+43	+41	+39	+33
23	+44	+42	+40	+35
24	+46	+44	+42	+36

STRIKE DAMAGE

The Strike Damage table on page 125 gives the damage a creature should deal with a single Strike. You might use a lower category if the creature has better accuracy, or a higher category if its accuracy is lower.

A creature that's meant to be primarily a melee threat uses high damage for its melee Strikes, or moderate for melee Strikes that have the agile trait. Ranged attacks more typically use the moderate value. A creature that's meant to be

highly damaging uses the extreme damage values but might then have a moderate attack bonus. As with most statistics, extreme damage is more likely at higher levels. You can also use the extreme value for special attacks that the creature can use only a limited number of times or under circumstances that aren't likely to happen every round.

More versatile creatures, such as ones that can cast some spells and aren't meant to primarily get their damage through Strikes, go one category lower: moderate for their main melee Strikes, low for agile and ranged Strikes. Spellcasters and other creatures that aren't meant to be competent in a direct fight might use the low damage value, or even less if they completely don't care about their Strikes.

The Strike Damage table entries include a damage expression (a die roll or rolls plus a flat modifier) you can use as is, or you can take the damage in parentheses and build your own damage expression to hit that number. If you do the latter, remember that a d4 counts as 2.5 damage, a d6 as 3.5, a d8 as 4.5, a d10 as 5.5, and a d12 as 6.5. Usually, a damage expression works best when roughly half the damage is from dice and half is from the flat modifier. If your creature deals special damage, like 1d6 fire from the *commercial flaming module* upgrade, that counts toward its total damage per Strike. Keep in mind that a creature using a weapon should have a damage value that feels right for that weapon. Extreme damage works well for two-handed weapons that use d10s or d12s for damage. On the other hand, an arc pistol uses only d4s, so an arc pistol wielder would need something like aiming bonus damage to deal extreme damage, or you might compensate for the arc pistol's lower damage per Strike by giving the creature the ability to attack more efficiently or use other tricks.

STRIKE DAMAGE

Level	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
–1	1d6+1 (4)	1d4+1 (3)	1d4 (3)	1d4 (2)
0	1d6+3 (6)	1d6+2 (5)	1d4+2 (4)	1d4+1 (3)
1	1d8+4 (8)	1d6+3 (6)	1d6+2 (5)	1d4+2 (4)
2	1d12+4 (11)	1d10+4 (9)	1d8+4 (8)	1d6+3 (6)
3	1d12+8 (15)	1d10+6 (12)	1d8+6 (10)	1d6+5 (8)
4	2d10+7 (18)	2d8+5 (14)	2d6+5 (12)	2d4+4 (9)
5	2d12+7 (20)	2d8+7 (16)	2d6+6 (13)	2d4+6 (11)
6	2d12+10 (23)	2d8+9 (18)	2d6+8 (15)	2d4+7 (12)
7	2d12+12 (25)	2d10+9 (20)	2d8+8 (17)	2d6+6 (13)
8	2d12+15 (28)	2d10+11 (22)	2d8+9 (18)	2d6+8 (15)
9	2d12+17 (30)	2d10+13 (24)	2d8+11 (20)	2d6+9 (16)
10	2d12+20 (33)	2d12+13 (26)	2d10+11 (22)	2d6+10 (17)
11	2d12+22 (35)	2d12+15 (28)	2d10+12 (23)	2d8+10 (19)
12	3d12+19 (38)	3d10+14 (30)	3d8+12 (25)	3d6+10 (20)
13	3d12+21 (40)	3d10+16 (32)	3d8+14 (27)	3d6+11 (21)
14	3d12+24 (43)	3d10+18 (34)	3d8+15 (28)	3d6+13 (23)
15	3d12+26 (45)	3d12+17 (36)	3d10+14 (30)	3d6+14 (24)
16	3d12+29 (48)	3d12+18 (37)	3d10+15 (31)	3d6+15 (25)
17	3d12+31 (50)	3d12+19 (38)	3d10+16 (32)	3d6+16 (26)
18	3d12+34 (53)	3d12+20 (40)	3d10+17 (33)	3d6+17 (27)
19	4d12+29 (55)	4d10+20 (42)	4d8+17 (35)	4d6+14 (28)
20	4d12+32 (58)	4d10+22 (44)	4d8+19 (37)	4d6+15 (29)
21	4d12+34 (60)	4d10+24 (46)	4d8+20 (38)	4d6+17 (31)
22	4d12+37 (63)	4d10+26 (48)	4d8+22 (40)	4d6+18 (32)
23	4d12+39 (65)	4d12+24 (50)	4d10+20 (42)	4d6+19 (33)
24	4d12+42 (68)	4d12+26 (52)	4d10+22 (44)	4d6+21 (35)

MANUFACTURED WEAPONS

As noted in Items on page 120, most creatures have less treasure than PCs, so those that rely on manufactured weapons are significantly weaker if you don't adjust the weapons' damage to compensate. The method for determining Strike damage on pages 124–125 abstracts the sources of damage, so you don't have to worry about adjusting the weapon's damage. If you do decide to calculate the weapon's damage, give your creature weapon specialization or greater weapon specialization much earlier than a PC would get it. You might also need to add sneak attack or similar abilities to make the creature deal more damage.

On the flip side, you might want to use a one-off creature as a source of a particularly high-level piece of treasure, such as a higher-grade weapon. In these cases, you might want to make the attack bonus higher for a tactical weapon or the damage higher for an advanced weapon so the PCs feel the weapon's effect before they obtain it. This will make the treasure feel more powerful since they've already been on the receiving end.

SPELLS

Your creature might have magical abilities that are best represented by spells. If you're making a highly spellcasting-themed creature, give it prepared or spontaneous spells. For a creature that has spells due to its magical nature, especially if that magic isn't its core focus, consider giving it some innate spells instead. How many spells you should give a creature depends on how you expect it to spend its actions in combat. If it's primarily going to be making Strikes, it might not have any spells, or it might just have a few to help it move around better or protect against certain types of magic.

When choosing spells, lean hard into the creature's theme. While many PCs choose spells to cover a wide variety of situations, creatures are more evocative the more focused they are. Consider selecting about three-quarters of the spells based on relevance to the theme and the remainder for other things. However, make sure the spells aren't all the same—selecting *instant virus* for most of a creature's spell slots doesn't make for a compelling disease-themed creature in the way a diverse selection of disease spells would.

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When choosing spells, some won't be very useful if cast at an extremely low rank compared to the creature's level. Most notably, damaging spells drop off in usefulness for a creature that's expected to last only a single fight. A damaging spell 2 ranks below the highest rank a creature of that level can cast is still potentially useful, but beyond that, don't bother. Spells that have the incapacitation trait should be in the highest spell slot if you want the creature to potentially get their full effect against PCs.

SPELL DC AND SPELL ATTACK MODIFIER

Level	Extreme DC	Extreme Spell Attack Modifier	High DC	High Spell Attack Modifier	Moderate DC	Moderate Spell Attack Modifier
–1	19	+11	16	+8	13	+5
0	19	+11	16	+8	13	+5
1	20	+12	17	+9	14	+6
2	22	+14	18	+10	15	+7
3	23	+15	20	+12	17	+9
4	25	+17	21	+13	18	+10
5	26	+18	22	+14	19	+11
6	27	+19	24	+16	21	+13
7	29	+21	25	+17	22	+14
8	30	+22	26	+18	23	+15
9	32	+24	28	+20	25	+17
10	33	+25	29	+21	26	+18
11	34	+26	30	+22	27	+19
12	36	+28	32	+24	29	+21
13	37	+29	33	+25	30	+22
14	39	+31	34	+26	31	+23
15	40	+32	36	+28	33	+25
16	41	+33	37	+29	34	+26
17	43	+35	38	+30	35	+27
18	44	+36	40	+32	37	+29
19	46	+38	41	+33	38	+30
20	47	+39	42	+34	39	+31
21	48	+40	44	+36	41	+33
22	50	+42	45	+37	42	+34
23	51	+43	46	+38	43	+35
24	52	+44	48	+40	45	+37



SPELL DC AND SPELL ATTACK MODIFIER

Set the creature's spell DC and spell attack modifier using the Spell DC and Spell Attack Modifier table above. Most creatures use the same DC for all their spells, even if they have multiple types, such as a creature with both prepared spells and innate spells.

Use the high numbers for primary casters, and the moderate numbers for creatures that have some supplemental spells but are focused more on combat. At 15th level and higher, the extreme numbers become standard for spellcasters. A few creatures might use the extreme numbers at lower levels, but they tend to be highly specialized, with very weak defenses and Strikes. Secondary spellcasters can go up to high numbers if they're above 15th level and have offensive spells. There's no low value—the creature shouldn't have any spells in the first place if it would be that bad at using them!

PREPARED AND SPONTANEOUS SPELLS

Spell slots work best for creatures that are meant to play like PC spellcasters. Choose the magical tradition best suited to the creature. You aren't strictly limited to that tradition's spell list, though sticking close to it will make your creature's connection to that tradition clearer. The decision to use prepared or spontaneous spellcasting should align with the creature's theme: a spontaneous spellcaster fits well as a one-off creature since spontaneous spellcasting grants greater flexibility in the middle of battle, while a prepared spellcaster makes for a great recurring character who can change their spells between appearances.

For a creature that can cast as many spells as a PC spellcaster, the highest spell rank the creature can cast is half its level rounded up. It gets five cantrips. If the creature's

level is odd, it gets two spell slots of the highest spell rank (plus three spell slots of each lower rank), or three spell slots of that rank (plus four spell slots of each lower level). If its level is even, it gets three spell slots of the highest spell rank (plus three spell slots of each lower rank), or four spell slots of that rank (plus four spell slots of each lower rank). You can base the number of spells on the class you're trying to emulate or choose more spells if the creature doesn't have many other abilities.

Because creatures tend to be "on stage" for only a short time, you usually don't need to fill every spell slot. You can often fill just the top three ranks of spells, pick cantrips, and slot in a few thematic backup spells in the fourth rank down. For a recurring foe, you might give it a full complement of spells.

FOCUS SPELLS

Some creatures have focus spells, especially when those focus spells clearly fit a creature's theme. Simply give the creature the focus spells you like and between 1 and 3 Focus Points (you can also allow your creature to cast focus spells using spell slots). Use the same DC and spell attack modifier as any other spell. A creature that has just 1 Focus Point is likely to cast a focus spell only once, unless it's a recurring enemy. If the creature has plenty of spells already, you might want to skip focus spells altogether, as they aren't as strong as top-rank spell slots.

INNATE SPELLS

Unlike prepared and spontaneous spells, innate spells can be of higher rank than half the creature's level rounded up, and you can choose how often they're used–they can even be used at will or be constant effects. The most notable innate spells tend to be top-rank ones that make a big impact but can be used only once, at-will spells that strongly reinforce the creature's theme, and constant spells that give it an ongoing benefit. A spell that's usable a limited number of times and has a lower rank than the creature's highest rank is typically less likely to come up in combat; however, that's a great spot for utility and recovery spells, such as *delete* or *personal gravity*.

Sometimes a strongly thematic innate spell is of a higher rank than the creature would normally be able to cast, but it's so fitting that it belongs there. Be careful when doing this, as PCs might not have access to the appropriate countermeasures for the spell. This option works best for support, action denial, or battlefield control spells that change the odds of a fight without outright killing anyone, such as the alghollthu omnipath's *dominate* spell. These should make the fight more interesting, not end it. Keep the number of such spells very low, typically just one.

Though you can achieve all sorts of things with innate spells, always start with the theme and an idea of how you want the creature to spend its actions. And though you could give the creature a tool to counter every kind of PC attack or trick, remember that the players chose those options to enjoy using them, rather than to be constantly foiled by an effectively invincible creature.

RITUALS

Since rituals happen during downtime, giving them to a creature is usually a purely thematic choice. You can skip even looking at rituals in most cases. If you decide a creature needs to have a ritual for your story, add in the ritual whenever you need it.

DESIGN ABILITIES

In this step, you'll take the ideas for abilities you noted when you developed your concept and design these abilities for your creature. You can look at existing creature abilities from *Alien Core* and feats from *Player Core* and use them as is or modify them to fit your needs.

When choosing abilities, think about both the number of abilities and the diversity of abilities. Having a large number of similar abilities can make the creature tougher to run, and it probably can't use them all anyway. A diversity of abilities gives the creature different ways to act in different situations and helps guide you as the GM. For instance, a combat creature might have one ability it uses to get into position, another to use when it wants to focus damage on a single enemy, and a third that's more defensive.

BASICS OF ABILITY DESIGN

There are a few principles of ability construction that you'll want to keep in mind. Some guidance for specific types of abilities will come later, but these apply to everything.

- Respect the action economy.
- Make sure abilities are level appropriate.
- Avoid "invisible abilities."

Action Economy

Understanding a creature's action economy is key to making it work in play. Remember how short the lifespan of a typical combat creature is. Including a bunch of combat abilities might mean you spend time building actions the creature will never have time to use. Narrow your selections down to the smallest and most compelling set that makes sense. Also keep in mind that special actions will compete for time with any combat spells you give the creature.

Reactions can help, giving the creature a way to act when it's not its turn. See Reactive Abilities on page 129 for advice on designing these tricky abilities.

Because of PC capabilities at higher levels, creatures at those levels should get more abilities that improve their action economy. For instance, creatures that grapple should have Improved Grab instead of Grab, Speeds should be higher, and many abilities that would've cost an action at a lower level should be free actions.

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Level Appropriateness

The effects of an ability should be appropriate to the creature's level. For damaging abilities, that means they follow the damage guidelines below. For others, take a look at spells and feats with a similar effect to see if they're level appropriate. For instance, say you're considering giving a 6th-level creature the ability to teleport a short distance. *Translocate* is comparable—that's a 4th-rank spell, normally cast by a 7th-level or higher creature. That means 6th level probably isn't too low, but the creature shouldn't be able to use the ability more than once. You can also compare your creature to those in *Alien Core* to see if the special abilities seem similar in power to those of other creatures of the same level.

Invisible Abilities

Avoid abilities that do nothing but change the creature's math, also known as "invisible abilities." These alter a creature's statistics in a way that's invisible to the players, which makes the creature less engaging because the players don't see it using its abilities in a tangible or evocative way. For example, an ability that allows a creature to use an action to increase its accuracy for the round with no outward sign (or worse, just grants a passive bonus to its accuracy) isn't that compelling, whereas one that increases its damage by turning its machine gun bullets into superheated plasma is noticeable. These both work toward the same goal—dealing more damage this round—but one is far more memorable.

ACTIVE ABILITIES

Abilities a creature uses on its turn have the most flexibility and scope. You can use the Spell DC and Spell Attack Modifier table on page 126 to determine active ability DCs as well as spell DCs. You can have an ability use 1 to 3 actions as needed (or be a free action in rare cases) and use just about any type of tactic. Feats, spells, and existing creature abilities provide a wide variety of examples, so look for something similar to your idea to use as a basis.

Consider how you want your creature to spend its turns. Two-action activities pretty much define the creature's turn, and single actions work best for supplemental benefits or normal Strikes. As you build out your idea of a creature's turn, don't forget about movement! A creature often needs to spend actions getting into position, especially early in a fight. This is especially challenging with melee-focused creatures. You can give such creatures abilities similar to a solarian's Stellar Rush or the void shark's Atmospheric Breach, or even grant it abilities that function like augmentations or armor upgrades from *Player Core*.

Use 3-action abilities sparingly, as a creature can't use them if it's slowed or stunned—making a creature's coolest or most defining ability use up 3 actions might mean the creature never gets to use it. These activities should be reserved for abilities that include some movement (like Trample) or that the creature is likely to use before engaging in combat. Don't make an ability use 3 actions as a way to balance it—saying "This can be more powerful than other abilities because it is less likely to work," is a recipe for frustration if you've made a cool ability that's too hard or even impossible for the creature to use.

Be especially careful with activities when designing boss creatures. They're likely to get targeted with the PCs' most powerful detrimental effects, get grabbed, become slowed, or otherwise have their actions restricted. Bosses need to have solid options they can use with 1 or 2 actions. This lets them use their remaining actions to get away, use a simple ability, or otherwise keep the fight dynamic.

Free Actions

Use free actions that don't have triggers sparingly, and when you do, they should almost always be used for support or utility actions, not Strikes or movement. If you come up with a free action, consider whether it should be its own action or part of a combo, such as drawing a weapon and attacking. In cases like the latter, you might be better off making a single action that allows the creature to draw a weapon and then Strike.

Damage-Dealing Abilities

If a special action is a single action with only one target, you can often set damage using the Strike Damage table on page 125. If it uses more than 1 action or requires setup in some way, it might deal higher damage than is typical; often, you can just use the extreme column in these cases.

For abilities that deal damage in an area, use the Area Damage table. These numbers are based on a 2-action activity (e.g., Area Fire and most damaging spells). Single actions should deal much less damage. An ability that has another significant effect, like applying a condition, should deal less damage; for this, look at the damage for 2 or more levels lower, and judge which value would best match based on the severity of the additional effect. These abilities typically allow a basic saving throw. The table includes values for unlimited-use abilities (ones that can be used at will) and limited-use ones (which can be used once or, like dragon breath abilities, once or twice but not on consecutive turns).

You can use the dice given or generate your own expression based on the damage in parentheses, as detailed in the Strike Damage section on page 124. If a high-level effect has a small area compared to similar abilities, you could have it deal more damage.

AREA DAMAGE

Level	Unlimited Use	Limited Use
-1	1d4 (2)	1d6 (4)
0	1d6 (4)	1d10 (6)
1	2d4 (5)	2d6 (7)
2	2d6 (7)	3d6 (11)
3	2d8 (9)	4d6 (14)
4	3d6 (11)	5d6 (18)
5	2d10 (12)	6d6 (21)
6	4d6 (14)	7d6 (25)

Level	Unlimited Use	Limited Use
7	4d6 (15)	8d6 (28)
8	5d6 (17)	9d6 (32)
9	5d6 (18)	10d6 (35)
10	6d6 (20)	11d6 (39)
11	6d6 (21)	12d6 (42)
12	5d8 (23)	13d6 (46)
13	7d6 (24)	14d6 (49)
14	4d12 (26)	15d6 (53)
15	6d8 (27)	16d6 (56)
16	8d6 (28)	17d6 (60)
17	8d6 (29)	18d6 (63)
18	9d6 (30)	19d6 (67)
19	7d8 (32)	20d6 (70)
20	6d10 (33)	21d6 (74)
21	10d6 (35)	22d6 (77)
22	8d8 (36)	23d6 (81)
23	11d6 (38)	24d6 (84)
24	11d6 (39)	25d6 (88)

DEFENSIVE ABILITIES

Active offensive abilities usually fit creatures better than defensive abilities do. Save defense increases for creatures that are strongly defense-themed. For martial creatures, something as simple as a shield and Shield Block is usually plenty. Defensive abilities often run the risk of being invisible abilities. For examples of good defensive abilities, look at spells like *sanctuary* for ideas, or other spells that create interesting protective effects instead of just granting a bonus. If you do want to make a creature defensive, pick one defensive ability rather than several, since stacking up multiple defenses can make for a frustrating fight. One solid style of defensive ability is a mode switch, which causes the creature to get stronger defenses but limits its attacks, spells, or other offensive options.

REACTIVE ABILITIES

Reactions and free actions with triggers can give a creature an impact outside of its turn. This can make the fight more interesting, but it might also be risky. It's tempting to give every creature a reaction, but that's not necessarily a good idea.

To decide whether your creature should have a reaction, first consider if the creature has the reflexes or insight to react well in the first place—for instance, a scavenger slime doesn't have Reactive Strike because it's slow to react. Oozes, constructs, and unintelligent creatures are less likely to have reactions than others for this reason.

Second, look at the complexity of the encounter your creature is likely to appear in. If you have a large number of creatures, skipping reactions can make the fight flow faster. A creature that's more likely to fight solo, on the other hand, might have a reaction to give it a way to continue to be dangerous amid an onslaught of attacks by the party.

When creating reactions, be careful with "gotcha" abilities—ones that punish players for making perfectly reasonable choices, for rolling poorly, and so on. If you include abilities like this, they need to reinforce the creature's core theme and the play style you want it to use in combat. For example, a creature that Strikes as a reaction when someone fails an attack roll will encourage PCs to use their actions on other tactics, rather than attacking multiple times each turn. Is that what you want? Is this dynamic essential for making the creature feel like it's supposed to? This isn't the type of ability you'd give to any old creature—only a skilled melee combatant.

Reactions should require something out of the ordinary to happen, or should be relatively weak if triggered by something ordinary. A reaction that triggers anytime someone tries to Strike a creature is likely to be perceived by the players as uninteresting because it's so predictable.

The best reactions should be telegraphed so when they happen, it makes sense to the players. Think of one of the core reactions of the game: Shield Block. The creature raises its shield—an obvious action the PCs can see—so when it blocks damage from an attack, that makes perfect sense. Similarly, if you made a crystalline creature, you might have it build up sonic energy in a low thrum, so when it uses a reaction to release a burst of sonic energy when hit, the players can say, "Oh, I should have seen that coming."

Reaction Damage

Reactions should use lower damage, usually that of a moderate Strike. A reaction that deals area damage might deal low damage, though use such reactions with caution.

CONSTANT AND AUTOMATIC ABILITIES

Certain abilities shouldn't use any actions. Auras are a common constant ability, with frightful presence, the pachinyam swarm's dust cloud, and the bloodbrother's frigid cold as notable examples. An aura needs a range, and if it needs a DC, you'll usually set it to the moderate spell DC unless the aura is one of the creature's defining concepts. For example, the liberoba's ultrasonic pulse DC is significantly higher because the aura is such an iconic part of the creature and necessary for it to see enemies.

Abilities the creature has no control over should be automatic. For example, the cybernetic zombie explodes when it dies. It has no option not to, so this wouldn't make sense as a reaction or free action. Conversely, the Ferocity ability is a reaction because it requires the creature to give itself a last push to stay at 1 HP.

Constant and Automatic Damage

Much like for reactions, damage for a constant ability should be pretty low. Usually, this value is just below low Strike damage. Automatic abilities, like the living wildfire's explosion ability, tend to deal moderate Strike damage or unlimited-use area damage. These abilities can deal even more if they happen only after the creature is dead or otherwise no longer presents a threat.

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SKILL ABILITIES

A skilled creature might have abilities related to its skills. The skill feats in *Player Core* make for a good baseline. Avoid giving your creature skill abilities that won't matter in its interactions with PCs.

REVIEW

Now it's time to look over your completed creature as a whole and make sure it's living up to your concept. Can it do everything you wanted? Does it fit its intended role? Is there anything you could add or anything superfluous you could cut to get the creature where it needs to be?

If this creature is built for combat, run through a few turns in your head. Does it still work decently if it gets slowed? Can it move into combat against the PCs effectively considering their mobility options compared to its own? Does it have any abilities it'll never use because of its other actions?

When you're satisfied with your creation, it's ready to hit the table. But that's not necessarily the end! If you notice issues during the game, you can fix them on the spot. It's your game, and you can freely change what you wrote if you think differently later on.

TRAIT ABILITIES

Creatures with certain traits tend to have similar abilities to one another. Many of these abilities are listed below to help you match the theme of the trait when you build your own creatures. Look at existing creatures with the trait to see these in practice.

ABERRATION

Senses usually darkvision
Languages usually Aklo

AEON

Traits monitor
Languages Utopian and other planar languages; envisioning for true aeons (*Alien Core*)

AIR

Languages usually Sussuran
Speed usually has a fly Speed

ANGEL

Traits celestial, holy
Aura Angels each have a unique aura based on how they serve as messengers and how they deliver those message.
Speed usually has a fly Speed
Rituals usually *angelic messenger* (*Alien Core*)

ANIMAL

Languages none
Int –4 or –5

ARCHON

Traits celestial, holy
Immunities fear
Virtue Ability Archons each represent a specific virtue, like courage or hope, and have a special ability based on the virtue they represent.

ASTRAL

Senses darkvision

AZATA

Traits celestial, holy
Weaknesses cold iron
Freedom Ability Azatas each represent a specific freedom, like free expression or free love, and have a special ability based on the freedom they represent.

BEAST

Int –3 or higher

CELESTIAL

Traits holy
Senses darkvision
Languages Empyrean
Saves often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic
Weaknesses unholy
Strikes typically have the holy trait

COLD

Immunities or **Resistances** cold

CONSTRUCT

Traits Many constructs lack minds and have the mindless trait.
Immunities bleed, death effects, diseased, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, spirit, unconscious, vitality, void; if mindless, add mental

COSMIC

Senses usually darkvision
Speed cosmic creatures with fly Speeds can fly through space and other zero-gravity environments
Immunities usually cold; **Resistances** cold or void

DAEMON

Traits fiend, unholy
Languages Daemonic, telepathy 100 feet
Immunities death effects
Death Ability Daemons each represent a specific kind of death, like death by disease or starvation, and have a special ability based on the method of death they represent.

DEMON

Traits fiend, unholy
Languages Chthonian, telepathy (usually 100 feet)
HP typically high to account for their multiple weaknesses

Weaknesses cold iron
Sin Vulnerability Demons each represent a specific sin, like envy or wrath, and have a special vulnerability based on the sin they represent. This should be something the PCs can exploit through their actions, which should then deal mental damage to the demon. The amount of damage should be based on how easy the vulnerability is to exploit.
Divine Innate Spells usually 5th-rank *translocate* and at-will 4th-rank *translocate*
Rituals usually *demonic pact* (*Alien Core*)
Sin Ability Demons also have a special ability based on the sin they represent, which either makes them better embody the sin or instills that sin in others.

DEVIL

Traits fiend, unholy
Languages Diabolic, telepathy (usually 100 feet)
Immunities fire; **Weaknesses** holy; **Resistances** physical (except silver), poison
Divine Innate Spells usually one 5th-rank *translocate* and at-will 4th-rank *translocate*
Rituals usually *diabolic pact* (*Alien Core*)
Infernal Hierarchy Ability Devils each have an ability corresponding to the role they play in the infernal hierarchy, typically focused around control or being controlled.

DRAGON

Senses darkvision
Languages usually Draconic and Triaxian
Speed usually has a fly Speed
Dragon Breath Many dragons have an activity to exhale magical, damaging energy, with specifics determined by their theme.

DRIFT

Traits cosmic

EARTH

Perception often tremorsense
Languages usually Petran
Speed usually a burrow Speed

ELEMENTAL

Senses darkvision
Immunities bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep

ELINDRIAN

Senses scent
Languages Elindrian, Formian, telepathy
Husk Mind Elindrians share a telepathic bond that allows them to communicate nearly instantaneously and grants them a primal connection to a massive radioactive ooze known as the Terror of Ukulam.

ETHEREAL

Senses darkvision

FEY

Senses low-light vision
Languages usually Aklo, Fey, or both
Weaknesses cold iron

FIEND

Traits unholy
Senses darkvision
Saves often a +1 status bonus to all saves vs. magic
Weaknesses holy
Strikes typically have the unholy trait

FIRE

Languages usually Pyric
Immunities fire; **Weaknesses** typically cold and water
Strikes typically deal fire damage

FUNGUS

Traits fungi without minds have the mindless trait
Immunities if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes slashing or fire

GIANT

Traits Large or bigger, humanoid
Senses low-light vision
Languages usually Jotun

HUMANOID

Int –3 or higher

INCORPOREAL

Str –5
HP terrible at lower levels, then low at higher levels
AC typically low or moderate
Immunities bleed, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision; **Resistances** all damage (except force, *ghost touch*, or spirit; double resistance vs. non-magical)
Strikes magical trait, typically low or moderate damage

JINSUL

Senses all-around vision, darkvision
Languages Jinsul
Strikes leg blades

KUCHARN

Traits Kucharn are colony components, meaning they're in constant telepathic communication with one another because of their hive mind, and each have a specialized function within the Swarm.
Senses darkvision, usually emotionsense

METAL

Languages usually Talican

MIDWIFE

Traits aberration, cosmic, midwife, holy or unholy
Languages telepathy (100 feet)

Divine Innate Spells *call cosmos*, *eldritch lance*, *eldritch wrath*, *massacre*, *revival*, *slice reality*, *void vessel*; constant *detect thoughts*

MONITOR
Senses darkvision

OOZE
Traits Almost all oozes lack minds and have the mindless trait.
Senses typically motion sense and no vision
AC usually terrible
HP usually around double
Immunities bleed, critical hits, precision, unconscious, often acid; if it has no vision, add visual effects; if mindless, add mental

PLANT
Traits plants without minds have the mindless trait
Senses usually low-light vision
Immunities if mindless, mental; **Weaknesses** sometimes fire

PROTEAN
Traits monitor
Languages Protean
Resistances precision, protean anatomy (*Alien Core*)
Divine Innate Spells constant *unfettered movement*
Change Shape (*Alien Core*)

PSYCHOPOMP
Traits monitor
Senses lifesense (typically 60 feet)
Languages Requian
Immunities death effects, disease
Resistances poison, void
Damage shepherd's touch (*Alien Core*)

SPECTRA
Traits cosmic, spectra
Languages Trinary, digital telepathy (typically 100 feet), truespeech
Senses darkvision, techsense

SPIRIT
Traits often incorporeal, often undead

SWARM
Traits size based on the entire mass, usually Large or bigger
HP typically low
Immunities grabbed, precision, prone, restrained, swarm mind (*Alien Core*); **Weaknesses** area damage, splash damage; **Resistances** physical, usually with one physical type having lower or no resistance

UNDEAD
Traits Almost all undead are unholy. Ghostly undead have the incorporeal trait. Undead without minds, such as most zombies, have the mindless trait.
Senses darkvision
HP void healing (*Alien Core*)
Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, sleep (or unconscious if it never rests at all); if mindless, add mental

WATER
Languages usually Thalassic
Speed usually has a swim Speed

WOOD
Languages usually Muan
Weaknesses fire and axes or slashing

BUILDING NPCS

Creatures that are meant to cleave closely to character classes or intended to represent people rather than monsters are NPCs. They might face more scrutiny around their mechanics than creatures because a player can more directly compare their operative to an NPC who acts like an operative. That doesn't mean you have to build an NPC exactly like a PC, though.

You can build NPCs just like you would any other creature. If an NPC should work like they have a class, use the class features and feats of a suitable class to pick abilities, and look at both the class's proficiencies and attribute modifiers to determine how strong the NPC's statistics should be. Class Road Maps on page 133 has pre-built road maps for *Player Core* classes to get you started.

If the NPC isn't meant to work like they have a class (a vidgamer, for example), instead build the character separately. You can create new abilities as needed to get the NPC's interactions with the PCs to express their theme and role in the story. These NPCs can be level –1 or level 0. Their capabilities are below those of PCs, and they should typically not use any class features or feats from PC classes. Creatures of these levels tend to be extremely simple.

It's highly recommended that you select NPC skills using proficiency ranks as you would a PC, though you don't need to be precise about the number of skill increases you give the NPC. You can give them earlier access to expert, master, or legendary proficiency if they're a skill-based NPC and better proficiency in narrow areas of expertise, like Sports Lore for a brutaris player NPC.

NON-COMBAT LEVEL
An NPC's level should represent their combat prowess. An ordinary person might not be a combat threat, even if they're important or highly skilled, and they consequently have a low level. However, that doesn't mean they can't present a challenge in other types of encounters. This is represented by a non-combat level (page 31) and tends to be specific to their area of expertise. For example, a corporate lawyer might be level –1 in combat but a 4th-level creature in an encounter related to legal matters.

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This can go the other way as well, such as with a powerful combat creature that's not suited to social settings. This is usually the case with creatures untrained in mental skills. You can improvise this as you run the game, or you can plan ahead if you have something particular in mind.

Building an NPC's non-combat level is relatively simple. Choose the level you want the NPC to be for the type of non-combat challenge you have in mind and use the skill numbers for that level–typically high or even extreme. Some challenges, such as social challenges, require the creature to have a high Perception and Will, so in those cases, you should increase those values as well. These should be set at the moderate or high values for the non-combat level, usually, depending on how adept you want the NPC to be.

Non-Combat XP

The Experience Points gained for besting an NPC depend on how the party overcame them because XP comes from overcoming a specific challenge. If the PCs defeat the NPC in a non-combat setting of the NPC's specialty, the party gets XP based on the NPC's non-combat level. If they just beat the NPC up, the XP would be based on the NPC's creature level. Quite often, that means 0 XP and failure at the PCs' objective; for instance, during a rock band audition, if the PCs murder the other musicians, not only would they be disqualified, but they would likely be charged with a crime.

PC-STYLE BUILD

If you do choose to build an NPC fully using the PC rules, your NPC should generally end up being an appropriate challenge as a creature of their level. They will likely have lower statistics in some areas than if you'd built them using the creature rules but more options due to their full complement of feats and class features. This is best saved for important, recurring NPCs, especially if they're meant to engage in social or exploration endeavors rather than just battles.

There are still some considerations and shortcuts that can expedite the process while ensuring the NPC works as intended.

- The creature's treasure should follow the Treasure for New Characters rules on page 61. You'll need to account for this in your campaign's overall treasure. You might even want to give the NPC a higher-level item appropriate as a treasure allotment for the level.
- You can expedite attribute modifier generation by making the starting attribute modifiers add up to +9, with no more than one modifier at +4 (and typically no more than one negative modifier). You can skip adding a background if you do this, but you might want to give the creature two skills, which includes one Lore skill, to represent the skills granted by a background.
- It's not necessary to assign every skill feat, particularly for a higher-level NPC. You can just pick the most emblematic ones and gloss over the rest.
- For general feats, Incredible Initiative and Toughness make good choices.
- Most of the guidelines about choosing spells still apply, though you might want a few more utility spells that deal with non-combat challenges, particularly in low-rank slots.

CLASS ROAD MAPS

You can use these suggestions when creating your road map to emulate a PC class, customizing as you see fit. You'll still need to look through the class to pick feats, weapons, and the like. Any statistic that isn't specifically listed can use moderate numbers.

You don't need to give an NPC all the abilities from its class–especially those that just alter numbers. Each class's entry lists several abilities that are good quick choices and make for more interesting encounters. This section includes the *Player Core* classes.

Envoy High Perception; high Charisma-based skills; high Cha; low Fortitude, moderate to high Will; low to moderate HP; moderate attack and damage. **Abilities** envoy directive (Get 'Em!), leadership style and related feats (especially reactions)

Mystic High Perception; moderate to high spellcasting skill, high connection skill; high Wis; low Fortitude, high Will; low to moderate HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** spontaneous spellcasting of a tradition based on their connection as a mystic of their level, connection spells, vitality network (5 HP per level)

Operative High Perception; high Dex-based skills, plus specialization skill; high Dex; moderate AC; low Fortitude, high Reflex; low to moderate HP; moderate to high attack and moderate damage before Aim plus high or extreme damage with Aim. **Abilities** Aim, on the move, specialization exploit and related feats

Solarian High Perception; high Athletics; high Str; high AC; high Reflex and Will; moderate attack and high damage. **Abilities** stellar attunement, solar manifestations (usually weapon)

Soldier High Athletics and Intimidation; high Con; moderate AC; high Fortitude and Will; high HP; moderate attack and moderate to high damage (including area attack with high to extreme DC). **Abilities** Primary target, suppressing fire, soldier fighting style and related feats

Witchwarper Low Perception; moderate paradox skill and high Intelligence-based skills; high Int; low AC; low Fortitude, high Will; low HP; low accuracy; high to extreme spell DC. **Abilities** spontaneous spellcasting of a tradition based on their paradox as a witchwarper of their level, quantum field, paradox and related feats and spells

BUILDING ITEMS

Creating your own magic and tech items is an amazing way to customize the adventure and gameplay for your group and add unique elements without requiring quite the same mechanical depth as a whole new class, archetype, or ancestry.



New items make great mementos of previous adventures and tend to be one of the easiest elements for a character to begin using mid-campaign after receiving them as a reward. This section explains the philosophy and numbers behind creating items so you can design your own in no time!

CONCEPT AND ROLE

First, come up with a concept for the item based on the role the item serves in your game and in the game's world. You might include a new item in an ancient ruin to hint at its history and characterize the technology lost when its creators disappeared. For instance, a ruined starship of the First Ones might have an item related to the construction of anacites, while an abandoned arcology on Bretheda might have medicinal items developed using biohacking technology lost in the Gap.

A new magitech item might be important later in the story, or its role might be as simple as a fun shadow-themed item for the witchwarper that uses Twisted Dark Zone. Keep your concept in mind to guide you through the process. Start thinking about what kind of magic item it will be. Each item type has its own niche, and some are less likely to be as useful to the PCs. For instance, new weapons and armor require the PC to give up the weapon or armor they already have, which might make them more reluctant to use the new items unless they're noticeably better, while consumable items don't have as big an impact on the story as permanent items.

ITEM LEVEL

A new item is typically going to be within a few levels of the PCs. If it's too low, it might not be interesting, and if it's too high, it might be too powerful or too lucrative to sell.

COMPARISON

First, look at similar items. For example, if you want a permanent item that lets someone fly, look at jump jets, which only boosts a character into the air for 1 action and thus can't be used to gain a huge advantage in combat, and jetpacks, which can. This will give you an idea of the right level range and the specifics and limitations of existing items. You might be able to just adjust one of those to get what you want.

ITEM EFFECTS

Next, use the item's concept and role to decide its effects. This is where your creativity will bring the item to life. Make sure to have it do something exciting and roleplay-inspiring. An item that does nothing more than deliver a bonus is far less interesting, even if the item does have a load-bearing item bonus, like a tactical-grade weapon. To determine the item's power, take into account the special abilities you give the item as well as the item bonus (if any) that it grants. For specific advice for the type of item you're creating, check out Designing by Type on page 135.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

When deciding what special abilities are appropriate for what level, it's best to look for similar spells to gauge the effect. For most consumables, the effect should be less powerful than the highest rank spell a spellcaster of the item's level could cast. *Spell gems* are about the most efficient you can get—they're the same level the spellcaster would be—but they require a spellcaster that has the spell on their list, and take the same actions as casting the spell normally.

The most straightforward choice is a once-per-day ability. For this, the item's level should be at least 2 levels higher than the minimum level a spellcaster could first cast that spell. For example, if your ability is about as powerful as a 3rd-rank spell cast once per day (perhaps *haste*), then it should be at least a 7th-level item. A basic *spell chip* is a good example. However, a *spell chip* is flexible and can contain the most effective possible choice for its spell rank (such as long-lasting spells where once a day is effectively permanent), so a specific item that doesn't grant such a spell could have additional powers or bonuses at the same price as a *spell chip*.

If the item can be activated multiple times per day, it should be at least 4 levels higher instead—9th level in our example. Frequency could range from twice per day to once per hour and anything in between. Choose whatever makes sense to allow the characters to use the item more frequently without being effectively constant or unlimited. The appropriate frequency, or whether it's ever okay to have unlimited activations, varies wildly based on the spell. Unlimited castings of a cantrip is fine, but an effect akin to a non-cantrip spell is rarely a good idea. Only attempt to build such an item when you're certain of the consequences.

Items that can be activated less often than once per day don't appear too often, and they usually fit best with abilities that make sense outside of encounters. It's still best to stick to the guidelines for once-per-day abilities, but these items tend to have more properties—and often strange ones.

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Constant Abilities

If you want an effect to be constant, set the level and Price accordingly. For instance, let's say your group is 9th level and you want to give them an item themed around allowing the entire party to fly. The 3rd-level augmentation ultralight wings provide a fly Speed for one character, and a 5th-rank casting of the *wild bond* focus spell gives most parties a fly Speed, lasts a minute, and can be cast multiple times per day using the Refocus activity, so it can cover flight by 9th level. To keep it simpler, you decide to create a 9th-level magic item that creates a swell of primal energy causing allies around you to grow wings and gain a fly Speed for 24 hours. Remember, some effects were never meant to be constant and could warp your game.

Activation Actions

Watch out when picking the number of actions an activation takes! A 1-action activation that casts a spell with a 2-action casting time is drastically more powerful in an encounter than an item with a 2-action activation would be. An item like that is typically much higher level, and it works best with "helper" spells or ones with limited utility rather than offensive spells. The safest bet is to use the same number of actions the spell normally takes to cast.



Spell Chip Assembly

Scaling out of Usefulness

Some spells aren't appealing if their rank is too low. For instance, an item that casts 1st-rank *overheat* three times per day might be 5th or 6th level. The problem is that spell scaling has the biggest impact at low levels, so the spell isn't effective compared to other actions a character could take. Err on the side of fewer, more impressive activations.

BONUSES

If your item includes item bonuses, check the table below for the minimum item levels the game's math expects permanent bonuses to be applied to. A lower-level item might give such a bonus temporarily, but keep track to make sure the item isn't effectively permanent. If a character typically Hacks three or fewer computers a day, there's no difference between a +2 item bonus to Hack a computer and an activation that gives a +2 item bonus to Hack three times per day.

For attack bonuses, AC, and saves, the minimums match tactical- and higher-grade weapons and armor. Skill bonuses come on a wider range of items. Some are more broadly useful, so an Athletics item might be more expensive than an equivalent Piloting item. Gaining a bonus to Perception is especially valuable compared to gaining a bonus to a skill. Just because an item is the minimum level for its bonus doesn't mean the bonus should be the item's only power. The item can and should have an additional interesting power beyond the bonus. Likewise, an item can come at a higher level than the minimum, but if it's much higher, its abilities start to compete with the next bonus.

LEVELS FOR PERMANENT ITEM BONUSES

Statistic	+1	+2	+3
Attack bonus	2	10	16
AC	5	11	18
Save (resilient trait)	8	14	20
Skill/Perception	3	9	17*

* This is also the minimum level for apex items.

DESIGNING BY TYPE

The following guidance applies to items of various types.

AMMUNITION

Ammunition is consumable; launching it destroys it. Pay attention to whether you give the ammunition an activation: any big flashy effect for its level should almost always have one since otherwise the effect is essentially a free action on top of a Strike. This is particularly important for extremely low-level ammunition since a high-level character could use that ammunition for every Strike without noticing the credit cost. Remember that activated ammunition doesn't function with Area or Automatic weapons. If the ammunition doesn't deal normal Strike damage on a hit, remember to say that! Dealing damage is the default.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Specific armor and weapons have a minimum grade and varying number of upgrade slots, so you have a lot of space to design. Choose abilities that feel attached to the fact that they're weapons or armor; for instance, a painglaive with extra-long teeth that you point at an enemy to launch bits of steel is more on theme than one that casts *wall of steel* in an unconnected way.

The specific item should cost more than the base grade armor or weapon would with just basic weapon and armor upgrades, but you can often discount the cost of the additional components significantly as part of the specific item's special niche. Be careful about specific armor or weapons that include weapon upgrades in addition to unique specific abilities. If you discount the item, you might end up with an item significantly superior to one built using the normal weapon upgrades system. That's not always bad since it's still giving up customization for power, and this can be appropriate if the item has an important place in your story. Just make sure the difference isn't too drastic. If you just want to create armor or a weapon with upgrades and no extra special abilities, you can do so. The Price of such an item is the sum of all the upgrades' Prices, and its level is that of the highest-level

MAGIC VS. TECH

Magic items and tech items follow a similar price economy based on their level, but the effects of magic items like *spell ampoules* can be a bit broader and more directly magical than tech items like serums. A character can only wear a certain number of magic items, and they tend to be more expensive, so they can do things tech items can't, such as confer the benefits of spells, and aren't affected by the glitching condition. Hybrid items have both the magic and tech traits but require Magical Crafting (*Player Core* 224) to craft and are affected by abilities that target magic or tech items.

weapon upgrade on the item (if higher than the grade of the weapon).

Runes & Upgrades

Runes and upgrades should never be on the same weapon. Runes (including spells and effects that confer runes) only function on archaic weapons, like those found in Pathfinder. Upgrades (including spells and effects that use upgrade slots) only function on weapons with the analog or tech traits. There are some explicit exceptions, such as *hardlight handwraps*, but if those items have upgrade slots, they should never have runes (and vice versa).



Zero cannon

AUGMENTATIONS

Augmentations are very similar to worn magic items, except you have far fewer slots and they're much more challenging to swap out. They often confer benefits like ancestry and heritage features, such as new movement speeds and senses. Be aware that 1st-level augmentations can be selected at character creation using options such as the Cyberborn background. The only augmentations that don't use slots should be apex items and augmentations such as *moodskin* that confer little to no mechanical benefit and are usually level 0.

HELD ITEMS

Usually, held items should require manipulation to use, with Interact activations. They're most often tools, implements, items that can be thrown, and the like. Imagine a PC physically using the item and what that looks like.

Remember that held items are more challenging for martial characters to use, compared to spellcasters or hands-free characters that specialize in unarmed attacks. A soldier might have to give up a two-handed weapon to use a held item, and so is less likely to use one. This means you might want to design held items specifically for non-martial characters, or have them be items a martial character uses outside of combat.

MEDICAL ITEMS

Medical items are consumables such as hypopens, medpatches and serums. These can be crafted using Serum Crafting (*Player Core* 227), so these items tend to be on the weaker end for their level, with lower prices. These items are capable of fantastical things but should remain distinct from the effects of magic items, like *spell ampoules* that duplicate spells. Avoid medical effects that feel too much like magic. Medpatches and sprayflesh provide sources of reliable healing without magic. Hypopens help remove a few common conditions ranging from sickened to drained and require counteract checks when removing afflictions. Serums can provide a varied number of effects, including temporary item bonuses to skills.

SPELL AMPOULES

Spell ampoules, also known as *spell amps*, allow you to literally inject yourself with magic. Since the action of injecting yourself isn't easy to split up, they take only a single action to activate. This advantage makes *spell ampoules* that replicate spell effects incredibly powerful, and it's the reason *spell ampoules* are nearly always higher level than *spell gems* with similar effects.

SPELL CHIPS

You won't need to design basic *spell chips*, but you might want a special *spell chip*. When designing a new special *spell chip*, your *spell chip*'s level will usually be 1 to 2 levels higher than the basic *spell chip*, depending on the magnitude of the special effect. You can always design a new tech or hybrid item with a *spell chip* permanently installed, but make sure it uses a spell thematically appropriate with the base item. Remember that if you make the *spell chip* 2 levels higher, it's now competing with *spell chips* of a spell a whole level higher, so the special effect should be worth that cost!

SPELL GEMS

You'll never need to design a new *spell gem*, but use them as a comparison when designing other types of consumables. If you're designing a consumable that seems like it's much better than a *spell gem* of its level–or faster to activate–you should probably raise the item's level or adjust the effect.

SHIELDS

Use existing shields as benchmarks to determine a shield's Hardness, HP, and BT for a shield of that grade using the same traits. New shields shouldn't exceed the hardness and HP values of those in *Player Core* without significant drawbacks, and you can use the magnitude of the reduction to build room for creative defensive abilities.

UPGRADES

Many items can be improved by installing upgrades into an item's unused upgrade slot. Upgrades are a fun and versatile

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way to customize weapons and armor without throwing away the previous items. Each should be fairly simple, especially at lower levels, because combining upgrades can make things overcomplicated. Compare to other properties to determine the right level.

While the upgrades in *Player Core* are exclusively for armor and weapons, you can design bespoke upgrades that apply to other items when necessary. Upgrades that go on items other than weapons and armor should define that the item can only use one upgrade, as only armor and weapons can get additional upgrade slots. In most cases, you're better off designing a higher grade for the item or designing a bespoke item that functions alongside other specific equipment, such as the *reusable grenade shell*.

WORN ITEMS

Worn items vary wildly in their effects, but all magic and hybrid items with the invested trait take up one of a character's 10 invested items. Remember to include the item's worn entry, if applicable (or "—" if you could imagine someone wearing 10 or more with no difficulty). Where the item is worn should usually match its effects or bonuses: shoes help you move, eyepieces affect your vision, and so on. As with held items, imagine a character wearing the item to picture how they use its magic.

Apex items are always at least level 17 and should have unique abilities on top of their bonus, just like other items.

FILL IN THE NUMBERS

You're almost done! The final step is to fill in the numbers.

DCS

Choose any DCs for the item's abilities, typically using the typical DCs in the table below. An item with a narrow function might have a DC up to 2 higher, and one that forces a save (such as with an aura) is typically 2 lower. The lower the DC, the quicker the item becomes obsolete.

ITEM DCS

Item Level	DC	Item Level	DC
1	15	11	28
2	16	12	29
3	17	13	30
4	18	14	31
5	19	15	34
6	20	16	35
7	23	17	37
8	24	18	38
9	25	19	41
10	27	20	43

ITEM PRICES

Each item level has a price range. Based on the item's role and abilities, decide where in that range to place it. There's plenty of variation, and you primarily need to worry about Price only if you expect the PCs will be able to sell it.

Primary items cost near the highest value for their level. They have a big impact on combat or player ability. This includes weapons, armor, and Perception items. The highest price is for items like tactical weapons and apex items. So an advanced weapon is 1,000 credits at 4th level.

Secondary items, with middle values, give significant secondary benefits or enhance highly consequential noncombat or support skills like Medicine or Crafting.

Tertiary items, with low value, are weird or very specific items, ones not usually core to a character's build. Especially strange ones might fall into the gap between two levels.

PERMANENT ITEM PRICE

Level	Price	Core Item
1	100–200 credits	
2	250–350 credits	tactical weapon
3	450–600 credits	+1 skill item
4	750–1,000 credits	advanced weapon
5	1250–1,600 credits	tactical armor
6	2,000–2,500 credits	
7	3,000–3,600 credits	
8	4,150–5,000 credits	advanced armor
9	5,750–7,000 credits	+2 skill item
10	8,200–10,000 credits	superior weapon
11	11,600–14,000 credits	superior armor
12	16,400–20,000 credits	elite weapon
13	24,000–30,000 credits	
14	36,000–45,000 credits	elite armor
15	53,000–65,000 credits	
16	79,000–100,000 credits	ultimate weapon
17	120,000–150,000 credits	+3 skill item, apex item
18	186,000–240,000 credits	ultimate armor
19	304,000–400,000 credits	paragon weapon
20	520,000–700,000 credits	paragon armor

Consumables

Consumables have a slightly narrower range, with top-end items like *spell gems*, optimum medpatches, or super-useful consumables like a *haste spell amp* at the high end.

CONSUMABLE PRICE

Level	Price	Level	Price
1	30–40 credits	11	2,001–3,000 credits
2	41–70 credits	12	3,001–4,000 credits
3	71–120 credits	13	4,001–6,000 credits
4	121–200 credits	14	6,001–9,000 credits
5	201–300 credits	15	9,001–13,000 credits
6	301–500 credits	16	13,001–20,000 credits
7	501–700 credits	17	20,001–30,000 credits
8	701–1,000 credits	18	30,001–50,000 credits
9	1,001–1,500 credits	19	50,001–80,000 credits
10	1,501–2,000 credits	20	80,001–140,000 credits

BUILDING WORLDS

As a Game Master, you control the details of the galaxy your players explore. While Starfinder offers a diverse assortment of worlds to experience, there are infinite possibilities for new planets, whether in the unexplored regions of the Vast or in entirely new campaign settings of your own creation.

Building your own campaign world can be a deeply fulfilling creative process, as it lets you bring to life the exact setting you envision. It gives you great flexibility so you can build only as much as you need for the next few adventures, and you can adapt your setting on the fly to meet the demands of your story. It also gives you great control, allowing you to build precisely the setting you need for the story you want to tell. Finally, it bypasses some of the issues that can come with playing within an existing campaign setting, where you might create a narrative that contradicts published canon, or your players might stumble across major plot or setting spoilers. Whatever your world-building goals, this chapter guides you through the design process step by step.

DESIGN APPROACH

World building can be approached in many ways, but it fundamentally comes down to a simple preference. Do you start at a high level and zoom in, or do you start small and build up? This section outlines a largely top-down approach, but you can design from the bottom up simply by starting at the end of this section and working backward. Either way, you might find yourself skipping between sections as inspiration strikes—and that's OK!

When building worlds, there's a risk of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number of decisions to be made. Remember that you don't need to make every decision for every aspect of your world all at once. Focus first on the elements you need for your story and the game, then add as much of the rest as you'd like. You'll also want to allow room for input from your players—gaming sessions are more memorable and engaging when the storytelling experience is shared between everyone at the table (page 18 has more information on players contributing to the narrative).

Before you decide anything else, however, you should establish your concept and your goals. Do you envision a bustling port of call in Near Space? A star system where magic comes from quarreling regional deities who each control a separate warring planetoid? A low-tech moon unknowingly isolated from the rest of a high-tech system full of starships? Are you designing a whole region of space for a multi-year campaign, or a single settlement on a world for a fast-paced one-shot adventure? Having an idea in mind will help steer your choices as you build your worlds, and knowing your goals will help you focus on building what you need.

TOP DOWN

The top-down approach is great if you have a lot of time to dedicate to world building. When designing a setting from the top down, your initial focus is on the big picture. You might already have an idea of the big movers and shakers of your world or your multiverse. You might want to chronicle a thousand years or more of the setting's history. You might have already sketched out a galactic map with each planet's continents, nations, and factions spanning these worlds. This approach begins with broad generalities that get more detailed during play and as you design them.

BOTTOM UP

With a bottom-up approach to world building, you start small and local. Focus on the starting location and immediate needs of your campaign, then expand outward as the story unfolds. This strategy works well for those with less time to devote to world building, as you need to prepare only the minimum detail necessary to entice your players toward adventure, fleshing out your world only as the campaign requires it.

COSMOLOGY

Before designing your campaign's first world, you should first consider the nature of its larger system and what that might mean for the planet. While most traditional heliocentric star systems like the Pact Worlds make developing your world as straightforward as taking cues from the real world, other system compositions are possible, either through quirks of physics or the intervention of powerful deities. Other alternatives to traditional heliocentric star systems can be found on page 139.

THE UNIVERSE

The reality in which mortals live out their short existence is known to sages and scholars by many names—the Universe or material reality, among others. The structure of the physical universe might adhere to any of the following models, or it might be something completely different.

Endless: The universe is an unimaginably sparse void of infinite space, littered with stars, planets, and various detritus.

Limited: The physical universe in your campaign world might be smaller in scope yet far more fanciful. For example, Norse cosmology describes nine worlds connected by an immense ash tree. How does that fit into your science fantasy story?

Bizarre: Sometimes the universe is more complex than the previous two categories, or possibly nested within multiple realities and timelines. What if the universe the PCs first know is in fact a magical or technological simulation of such complexity that its inhabitants are unaware that they exist as an artificial consciousness? Perhaps this is even where your PCs first meet before transitioning into another reality.

COMPOSITION OF SPACE

Whether the primary setting of your campaign or an avenue between worlds, the nature of outer space is as malleable as the rest of your cosmology.

Celestial Spheres: The ancient Greeks posited that planets, stars, and more were embedded like jewels within celestial orbs of quintessence nested within one another. Perhaps celestial bodies in your campaign are really massive *aeon stones*, or something else unique to your setting.

Endless Sky: What if the blue sky overhead extended outward forever? One need only fly high enough and far enough to reach another world, using environmental protections to defend against the frigid cold. In such a campaign, space might not carry the hazards of radiation and breathlessness, but it might be more like a vast sea where ships and people flow with the currents and explore the depths.

Vacuum: In conventional astronomy, outer space is an immense void existing in a near-perfect vacuum. The immeasurable expanse of space is home to everything in the Universe and requires starships to both navigate and survive. You might incorporate hard sci-fi details to make adventures in outer space feel more believable and perilous.

THE BARYCENTER

A star composes the center of most solar systems, which develop planets from the detritus following the collapse of a nebula or other cosmic shock wave. In a binary star system, the barycenter of a system is likely the center point between the two rotating stars. Erratically shaped systems can shift the barycenter away from the center of gravity, whether by recent cataclysm or proximity to another source of gravity. A supernatural collapse of a solar system's star could even result in a black hole developing at the center of a cluster of doomed planets, entire generations passing in the eternal darkness only to one day be consumed by their dead star. What lies near the barycenter of your galaxy? Does anything reside there, mortal or otherwise? How do the civilizations in your setting view the construct that keeps their worlds in place? There are effectively three options for most settings.

Dyson Sphere: Perhaps a solar system has been enclosed in an artificial structure designed to harness the power of the sun. The residents have long since forgotten, and escaping the sphere is an eventual goal of the campaign.

Geocentric: What if another world was the center of the known universe? Perhaps it's the primary game world, or perhaps it's the campaign's final destination.

Heliocentric: Physics dictates that all planets in a system orbit the sun, and the center of mass of a galaxy orbits a black hole. Some systems might have more than one star.

PLANETS

You'll need to develop some details of your campaign's home world before you begin your campaign. While some games might stay on a single planet, the opportunity for space travel and intergalactic contact means you should also consider the fundamentals of the other important planets in your setting. These worlds can also help inspire your players during character creation, especially if they want to play ancestries that aren't native to your campaign's home world. Don't be afraid to work alongside your players to draw inspiration from their character's backstories when choosing the themes of your planets.

While these guidelines are intended for the creation of your campaign's initial home world, they can be revisited each time your players visit a new planet!

PLANETARY BASICS

When designing the physical features of a campaign world, you'll want to determine its shape and the general distribution of landmasses. You should also establish the world's size relative to its neighbors, though the importance of a planet is rarely relative to its mass.

Shape

In a science-fantasy setting, the shape of your world need not be spherical as governed by the laws of physics. It could take on any shape you desire, and it might not be a planet at all!



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Globe: Barring some catastrophe, worlds in our reality are roughly spherical due to the influence of gravity.

Hollow World: What if the landmasses and civilizations of a world existed on the inner surface of a hollow sphere? In such a world, the horizon would climb upwards, permitting creatures to see landmarks at extraordinary distances. A vast civilization might inhabit the interior of the world, lining the outer edge with solar panels for renewable power. Light might emanate from a sunlike orb in the world's center, from various other natural, technological, or magical sources, or not at all.

Irregular: What if your world is flat, a toroid, or shaped into a cylinder, cube, or other polyhedron? What if it's something even stranger? With such an unusual shape, you need to decide how gravity, atmosphere, and other details function. These types of irregular shapes can also include asteroids, colony ships, and space stations.

String: The world might be something entirely unique, like a stellar waterway akin to the River Between (page 164), a chain of stellar debris each a mini-world in its own right, or even a planetary ring detached from its maiden world and cast into the void.

Composition

While most habitable home worlds are assumed to be terrestrial planets like Earth, in a science-fantasy setting the only limits are your imagination, and each change presents new options for far-reaching cultural and technological innovations. Some worlds combine these compositions, such as the tidally locked world of Verces that's half frozen from a lack of sun and half searing from intense solar activity, with a ring of cities separating the two extremes.

Barren World: These barren worlds include asteroids and desert and rocky planets unable to support life on its surface. Residents are often from other worlds or spend most of their lives struggling to survive. Some of these worlds have evolved intelligent life capable of handling the extreme circumstances. They include worlds that once teemed with life that has since been destroyed by war or some other invasive force, like the husk worlds left behind by the Swarm or the once-living planet of Eox. In many cases, the composition of the world is completely bizarre, such as a world composed entirely of crystals!

City World: Also known as an ecumenopolis, this planet-sized city completely covers the surface of the world, often spanning even the vast and often polluted oceans that once supported life on the overly developed world. These planets likely have several superstructures visible from space but are otherwise vast monuments littered with lights. It could've been built on a moon or asteroid, perhaps as a colony from another nearby world. While these worlds are often the most populated, they also frequently have the least variety of life (at least in terms of plants and animals) and could even be mostly abandoned due to a planetwide catastrophe exacerbated by its sprawling monoculture. A city world is likely to be or have once been united under a single nation-state, even if it's now divided into multiple city-states or rival districts. Oftentimes, the planet forms slums near the surface while the wealthy live atop skyscrapers or in floating arcologies high up in the atmosphere where they're safe from pollution and noise.

Constructed: Constructed worlds didn't form naturally but were built by their inhabitants using natural or synthetic materials. A constructed world could be an inhabitable space station, a massive worldship, or a terraformed satellite resembling a real planet. Examples in the Pact worlds include Absalom Station and the *Idari*.

Gas Giant: These enormous worlds are often circled by countless moons large enough to support entire campaigns. Some, like Bretheda, have cities floating atop or within the gas. Others float along the ring of these worlds, the composition of which can hint at the world's history. Perhaps some creatures can survive on the surface of these worlds, protected by eternal storms too violent for most spaceships to navigate. The substances of these worlds are often harvested for interplanetary trade.

Ice World: Ice and snow cover these frigid worlds often found on the fringes of a star system. Cities frequently develop inside of mountains or atop enormous thermokarsts, regions replete with hollows like the Ice Wells of Aballon, that offer a reprieve from the eternal cold. Perhaps the only known structure in these worlds is a single research or military station operated by a skeleton crew, or perhaps the residents thrive in the frigid wastes or live in aquatic cities submerged under the miles-thick ice.

Lava World: Volcanic plumes of lava and smoke cover these worlds, often controlled by one or more mining companies looking to exploit the rare starmetals and other resources left undisturbed on these often lifeless planets. What kind of life could develop in these worlds? How might they react to being exploited by alien miners? And what valuable resources and treasures might await those who can survive in such a hostile environment?

Lush World: Forests, jungles, or swamps cover these worlds. Whether natural, supernatural, or the result of terraforming gone awry, these worlds often have civilization-ending threats, like colossi, that prevent their unspoiled nature from being exploited and their surfaces from rampant development. Perhaps these threats might not be as obvious as giant monsters and could very well be surges of primal magic, random boiling geysers the size of cities that sustain the verdant paradise, or microbial threats that can bypass even the highest-grade environmental protections.

Terrestrial: These Earth-like worlds include oceans and continents with all the variety you'd expect on a habitable surface. The planet itself could've been terraformed with technology or magic necessary to keep it from becoming another type of world.

Water World: A world composed of or submerged in planet-spanning oceans could include a smattering of islands or floating settlements. Is the world surrounded by pristine blue seas, or is the water green due to continent-sized algal blooms? Perhaps the liquid isn't even water but instead a substance that either makes the planet a center

of the galactic economy, or it's a cursed world avoided and shunned by the rest of the galaxy.

LANDMASS

The next major step in world creation is to sketch out the planet's oceans and major landmasses—assuming the world type has them! On Earth, these geological features are the result of plate tectonics. In a science-fantasy world, however, the continents might have been cleaved from the land in a duel between gods or powerful witchwarpers, or the oceans filled by towering terraforming columns that still dot the shores to this day. The following are some common landmass types.

Archipelago: A stretch of vast ocean, dotted by chains of small island groups, atolls, and islets.

Continent: A substantial landform that (usually) rests on a tectonic plate and gradually shifts in position over geologic timescales.

Floating Continent: Whether floating in a gas giant at the point where the composition of the gas becomes semi-solid or suspended by technology or magic above a war-torn world, these enormous landmasses provide a way for traditional life to exist on a planet otherwise hostile to life.

Island-Continent: An enormous island nearly the size of a continent, surrounded by ocean.

Major Islands: A region of seas dominated by large islands, each several hundred miles across.

Orbital: Natural or constructed satellites can be large enough to be settled by intelligent life, perhaps even seeding the ring of a much larger planet or forming a chain of moons.

Supercontinent: An assembly of the world's continental blocks into a single immense landmass.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment and terrain of a region can pose as much of a challenge to an adventuring party as any of the foes they face. The following section references the environment categories beginning on page 92.

Common Environments

The following environments are common enough that they might appear in nearly any adventure or world.

Aquatic: Oceans, seas, lakes, and other large waterways are aquatic environments.

Arctic: Arctic environments usually appear near the northern and southern extremes of a world, though extreme elevation, unusually shaped worlds, and supernatural forces could result in arctic terrain elsewhere.

Desert: Deserts can appear anywhere on a world where precipitation is scant, even along some oceans. Any large landmasses that entirely lack bodies of water are likely to be deserts.

Forest: The composition of a forest depends on the climate and the elevation, with thick jungles more common near an equator, hardwood forests in more temperate zones, and evergreens at higher latitudes and elevations. Most worlds have a tree line—an elevation above which trees can't grow.

> **CAMPAIGN REFERENCE**
>
> Before the campaign starts, you might want to begin the outline for a campaign reference: a living document that you can easily review and annotate during gameplay and that records the planets, factions, history, characters, and plots central to your campaign.

Mountain: A world's highest peaks can stretch tens of thousands of feet above sea level. This category also includes hills, which are typically no more than 1,000 feet tall.

Plains: Mostly flat and unobstructed, plains are usually at lower elevations, but they can also be found at higher elevations on plateaus.

Swamp: Wide floodplains, shallow lakes, and marshes can appear at most latitudes.

Underground: Colonies and outposts on barren worlds are often built underground to protect from cosmic radiation and maintain livable temperatures. They can also be constructed into mountains as part of a larger settlement.

Urban: Cities and settlements are urban environments. These areas are detailed in Settlements, beginning on page 146.

Extreme Environments

Some adventures lead to fantastic reaches of the world or the multiverse that are seldom explored by mortals.

Aerial: A world might include windy realms of floating islands and castles in the clouds, or form a swirling gas giant.

Alien: Encompassing all manner of unique environments, alien environments represent biomes prevalent to a specific world or even those we haven't yet pondered could exist. Examples could include a vast sea of self-replicating crystal or a world where the landmasses and water shift into different states of matter at irregular intervals.

Glacier: Massive sheets of dense ice constantly moving under their own immense weight, glaciers are frozen wastelands riddled with columns of jagged ice and snow-covered crevasses.

Gravity: Both high- and low-gravity environments present opportunities for fantastical ecologies and challenges for visitors. See page 98 for more details on these environments.

Radioactive: Whether barren wastes or abandoned cities, these environments frequently feature mutated flora and fauna, pools of acid, and radioactive materials that can overwhelm even higher-level environmental protections.

Underground: Some worlds have deep natural caverns, while others have extensive winding tunnels and expansive realms below the surface.

Undersea: A subset of aquatic environments, undersea environments are those areas submerged beneath the waves.

Vacuum: Worlds without breathable air are either deserted wastelands or otherwise occupied only by constructs,

undead, and cosmic beings often too alien for most mortals to understand.

Virtual Reality: Your world is entirely digital. Your players can only ascertain this truth over time via hints, and whether or not the entire planet's population is trapped in a virtual space, or the entire universe is a simulation, can depend on the campaign's scope and theme.

Volcanic: Hellish landscapes of molten lava, burning ash, and scorching temperatures pose immediate danger.

MAPPING A WORLD

Many Game Masters like to have an overland map for their local region, nation, or even the whole world. This is far less important if you're planning a multi-planetary campaign with no set home world, but it can help add to a campaign's verisimilitude to include some of these details if your campaign uses a consistent port of call, whether it's a space station or an entire planet. The primary goal of this scale of map is to designate sites of import to the campaign; you don't need to detail every nature preserve or strip mine, but having a sense of the major features can help you and the other players visualize the world in which you're playing.

Step 1. Coastlines: The easiest first step is to separate land from sea (whether those seas are frozen, molten, or even sand). Regional maps might only have a single shoreline, if any. At larger map scales, consider the placement of major islands, archipelago chains, atolls, and islets. A world map should consider the size and placement of continents.

Step 2. Topography: Pencil in a rough ridgeline for each mountain range in the region. Mountain ranges are common along coastlines where continental plates push together. If extended into the sea, mountain ranges typically result in a chain of offshore islands. Indicate hills in the regions adjacent to the mountains and elsewhere as necessary to demonstrate elevation. Unmarked terrain on an overland map is usually lowland plains. Even in worlds with efficient mass transit, these important geographic elements determine defensible positions, population centers, and ports of call.

Step 3. Watercourses: It's important to keep in mind that rivers flow downstream, from high elevation toward the sea, always taking the path of least resistance. Powerful watercourses might carve canyons or gorges over millennia, but they should never cross through mountain ranges. On a similar note, watercourses don't branch—tributaries join into rivers as they flow downstream. Even high-tech societies will naturally benefit from developing alongside natural sources of fresh water, both for conventional uses like drinking and sanitation and for industrial uses like shipping and hydroelectricity.

Step 4. Terrain and Environment: Sketch in interesting terrain features such as forests, deserts, or tundras. You might want to differentiate these by climate, separating coniferous and deciduous forests from tropical jungles or arctic taigas. Terrain not specifically called out on an overland map is typically presumed to be some variety of farmland in developed worlds and grassland in less developed worlds.

Step 5. Civilization: Now you're ready to place the elements of civilization. Major cities are typically located near water, and those with spaceports are usually near the equator to save on the energy required during space launches. Major freeways or rails connect larger settlements, circumventing difficult terrain and connecting centers of culture and industry, but they can wind through mountain passes or even beneath the ocean when lucrative commerce demands it. Add smaller settlements along your roads, like resorts to appreciate nature, less tech-inclined rural communities, or businesses requiring large tracts of land like farms. Finally, draw political boundaries and mark other sites of interest. Are these borders purely physical, or are there separated infospheres on these worlds that further divide these rival nations?

CIVILIZATION

Once you've established your home world and other important planets, it's time to establish significant nations, whether they're bound to a single world or part of a larger interstellar coalition, and then define major ports of call.

When it comes to designing a setting's cultures, you might want to focus primarily on areas the party is likely to explore first. Doing so allows you to establish the details and depth of one region's peoples before expanding out to address others. That isn't to say you shouldn't have ideas about the cultures beyond your starting settlement—it just means you don't need to decide every detail of every culture all at once.

As always, you don't need to demarcate every planet in the solar system or indicate every station, city, and spaceport. Keep your focus on what you need for your story and your adventure—leaving terra incognita can lead to stories down the road as the party ventures further from home.

SOCIETAL BENCHMARKS

The following sections can help you establish certain truths about your world as a whole. From there, you can decide the details of specific cultural groups, including whether they deviate from these global standards.

Technology

Throughout history, a major driver of world culture has been the continuous advancement of technology in warfare, agriculture, and industry. The following categories roughly approximate real-world technological levels, but progress might vary on your world. What heights of technology have been achieved? Have any groups fallen behind or leaped ahead?

Primeval: Weapons and tools in this early era are crafted primarily from bone, wood, or stone. Knowledge of stonecutting allows early civilizations to raise stone walls and buildings. If visited frequently by those with other technology, they might salvage pieces of sturdier materials to use as tools. If resistant to advanced technology, they might even develop magic and tools that are extra effective against technology.

Antiquities: Advancements in mining and metallurgy lead to weapons and tools made from bronze and later iron. Crop rotation and storage ensure greater resilience to famine, leading to the development of complex irrigation and large

militaries that can consolidate and conquer city-states into major empires. The economy is dominated by river and sea trade between coastal settlements aided by oar- and sail-powered galleys. Alien technology is often readily incorporated, as wars are often won during this relatively rapid advance in technology.

Early Industrial: Warfare in this era is defined by iron armor until the development of black powder firearms. Larger ships permit ocean crossings and long-range trade to distant shores. The printing press increases literacy and speeds up the dissemination of new ideas, and the development of early steam engines rapidly shifts societies' focus to engineering and science. Dirigible airships and observation balloons make it more likely for locals to recognize devices like spaceships as technology rather than magic, and a desire to replicate the technology makes any kind of first contact more dramatic than ever before.

Late Industrial: Heavy machinery and a race for diminishing resources define this period of technological development. Famine and plagues are likely confined to less industrialized nations exploited for their natural and human resources. Consolidated power in countries with the most advanced technology, coupled with the knowledge that an actual war between the nations could have nigh-apocalyptic side effects, means a need to reform social traditions, especially once major developments like atomic energy and telecommunications bring about subsequent technological revolutions. Cultural exchange and leisure time would permit the development of games and stories to inspire future technology, lending itself to greater acceptance of more advanced technology regardless of its source.

Tech Renaissance: This civilization teems with advanced technology and magitech, including but not limited to cybernetic augmentations and artificial intelligence. While technology has made conventional warfare too dangerous, nations and corporations openly engage in hacking and sabotage for economic control of ideas in lieu of direct control over land. Globalization, communication technology, and the intermingling of cultures have made national and ethnic identity secondary to stark individuality. Outside of the glittering cities of skyscrapers, you're less and less likely to find any but the most stringent luddites, as most farms would be automated while nations allow nature to reclaim rural communities for the sake of a balanced ecosystem. Visitors with more advanced technology would be hesitant to visit these worlds without a disguise, knowing how much alien tech would be worth to factions struggling to get an edge in a cutthroat market of ideas.

Spacefaring: Journeying to the final frontier opens countless paths for technological and social progress, including openly intermingling with alien technology, establishing new governments independent from any on a civilization's home world, and the necessity of tools needed to survive the harsh conditions of space that are developed and improved independent of an astronaut's home world. As space colonists from post-scarcity societies struggle to survive, they can find their technology lagging behind their predecessors, potentially reaching a state resembling a post-apocalyptic level of technology for centuries before explorers from their long-forgotten home world rediscover them.

Post-Scarcity: At this level of technological progress, there's no longer a need for mortal species to compete for resources. All needs and basic desires are met, resulting in an opportunity for social and artistic progress unhampered by the inequalities of the past. Oftentimes, this level of technology betrays a darker truth, as the society is propped up by those who could only dream of the false utopia. Other times, the civilization's military or explorative tech is no more advanced than a tech renaissance or even late industrial civilization, as some watershed moment in the civilization's history pushed them to focus their efforts on energy, food, technology, and resource allocation. Such a utopia might be accepting and curious of outsiders, or it might fear that the inclusion of outside technology might damage their hard-won harmony.

Transcendent: The members of this civilization have gone beyond their physical bodies to become something more. Whether they're ascended beings of pure energy, digital consciousnesses existing in a virtual reality, or a merged hyper-consciousness spanning dozens of worlds, the preservation of their consciousness has become the primary concern of this civilization. Any other advanced technology exists only as vestigial artifacts left behind in their now empty cities. Sometimes these civilizations can attempt to forcefully integrate others into their trans-mortal hive minds, or else eradicate their targets out of fear of other life-forms developing a way to erase them from existence. Other times they are above reproach and feel compelled to protect other species from even greater cosmic threats. Civilizations that attempt this level of technology can carry on as once-mortal robots, feral mutants, or paranoid undead, the fear of death having driven them to become inhuman facsimiles of their former selves.

Post-Apocalyptic: Oftentimes a civilization finds itself progressing backward in the tech tree due to fear of rapid advancement, a cataclysmic war, or even divine intervention. They could be left with vestiges of their former glory, perhaps having vague notions of how to use these ancient devices while treating even the most mundane tech as though it were magic. They might outright reject and hunt down advanced technology, blaming it for their daily struggles to survive in a world decimated by radiation or rampant biotechnology.

Divine Involvement

What's the nature of the gods? Do they even exist? If so, are they omnipotent and omniscient? How does a follower request their divine favor? The answers to these questions will help you determine how strongly divine faith impacts the cultures of your world.

None: Deities don't exist in this world, or if they do, they're oblivious to or completely unconcerned with mortal affairs. If they exist, they don't make their presence known, nor do they grant power to their worshippers. People might still believe in deities, and there might be powerful enough

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entities, or artificial intelligences, that have convinced people to worship them.

Limited: Deities exist, though they remain aloof from the mortal world and make their divine presence known only to a chosen few.

Accepted: Divine influence is an accepted fact of everyday life. Their will is enacted through priests and organized religions. Divine avatars might appear in the world during extreme circumstances.

Ubiquitous: Deities live among mortals, exerting their divine will directly. Gods frequent social media sites, run streaming broadcasts to their followers, or even dominate entire solar systems as rulers.

Magic

Does magic exist? If so, which traditions are available? What are the sources of a spellcaster's power, and how do they gain and channel that magic?

No Magic: Magic of any kind doesn't exist in this world. Spells and magic effects don't function. Consider the variants on page 82 to handle the lack of magic items or convert magic items to tech items using such advanced technology as to be indistinguishable from magic.

Low Magic: Magic is mysterious and taboo. The few practitioners of the mystical arts are feared or shunned. Again, consider the variants on page 82 to handle the relative scarcity of magic items.

Common: Magic is an accepted fact of everyday life, though, like computer programming, most users don't bother learning the details of how it works. Magic portals and gates can whisk travelers "in the know" halfway across the world or to the other side of the multiverse.

High Magic: Magic and magical items are commonplace in society, perhaps even more than technology. It might be as easy to learn spellcasting as it is to learn a new language. Many tech objects are replaced with magic objects that cost the same and serve the same function, like handheld magic mirrors instead of comm units. The fantastic is never more than a stone's throw away.

THE MULTIVERSE

In Starfinder, the physical universe of your world is one plane within a much broader multiverse. The Planes, on page 182, details how planes work and the multiverse of Starfinder, but you can fit planes into your story and world, or even build a new multiverse from scratch! Perhaps there are only two planes beyond the material Universe, diametrically opposed and fighting over mortal souls, or the multiverse consists only of a series of infinite alternate realities. The options are truly endless, limited only by your imagination and the story you want to tell.

RELIGION

The greatest stories from myth and legend speak of immortals with incredible powers of creation and destruction. Some meddle in the affairs of mortals, shaping heroes and history at a whim, while others remain aloof or oblivious to the mortal world. Regardless of the world you're building, religion (or even the absence thereof) shapes the characters and the stories you tell.

THEOLOGY

Religious traditions are commonly categorized by their belief in one or more divine entities.

Polytheism: This belief system posits the existence of many gods. Polytheistic gods typically espouse particular areas of concern and often reflect the appearance of their worshippers. The primary religious philosophy of Starfinder is polytheistic.

Dualism: This philosophy espouses an enduring conflict between two diametrically opposed cosmic forces; most commonly good and evil or law and chaos. Acolytes of each faith almost always see themselves as righteous, and those of the contrasting belief as false. Some philosophies fuse cosmic duality into a whole. The philosophical cosmic balance of the Cycle focuses on the dual nature of creation and destruction.

Monotheism: A monotheistic doctrine recognizes the existence of only one true god, such as the Jinsul Hierocracy and their supposed devotion to Kadrical. The supreme deity might exhibit more than one aspect yet remain a single entity, like Zon-Shelyn from Starfinder.

Pantheism: Divine power arises from the universe itself or as a byproduct of the collective power of many deities sharing some common facet, either way forming a vast, all-encompassing divine entity. Worshippers sometimes appeal to or devote themselves to specific fundamental concepts or aspects of the universe.

Animism: Rather than worshipping gods associated with souls and spiritual essence from beyond, animism sees the life force in each part of the world, whether it be the trees of an old-growth forest or a towering waterfall.

Singularitism: In high-tech campaign worlds, some believe that all life will merge into a vast technological collective hive mind. Believers in machine-life evolution, like the Mechanizers, might see it as an inevitable path all life will eventually pursue. Others believe that life's purpose is creating a perfect AI that will guide life toward machine perfection. While most tend to acknowledge this long-term goal as one that can't be forced, more radical believers might take an aggressive approach, forcefully converting organic life-forms into cyborg bodies.

Atheism: In some campaign worlds, the gods have all died, abandoned their worshippers, or never existed at all. Mortals of this world might still cling to belief and establish religions in the name of the divine, but there are no true deities to answer their prayers.

PANTHEONS

In polytheistic traditions, a pantheon is a divine hierarchy of multiple (or even all) deities.

Universal: All deities in the setting belong to a single pantheon. Different cultures might have their own names

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for the god of magic, for instance, but only a single deity answers their prayers.

Ancestral or Regional: Each ancestry or region worships its own distinct pantheon. These pantheons coexist in the same cosmology but establish control in separate divine realms. Across the cosmos, several gods from disparate pantheons might share the same area of concern, but they seldom compete for worshippers from rival pantheons. They might also share the same infosphere sites or social media platforms, combining followers by sharing broadcasts.

Competitive: The world contains smaller regional pantheons competing for mortal worship. Only one deity of a specific area of concern may ascend to greater power across all the pantheons. As such, deities typically have little loyalty to their own pantheons and might actually switch to another pantheon if it earns them additional worshippers.

None: The deities of this multiverse act as individuals with no familial ties or common agendas binding them to each other.

DEITIES

These immortal beings command vast power and influence fueled by the faith and souls of mortal worshippers. In Starfinder, deities also dictate some of the abilities of those who channel their power. When designing deities, you'll need to include the divine statistics and devotee benefits described below.

Divine Rank

Gods are usually ranked in a divine hierarchy, from newly ascended godlings to almighty creator gods of unfathomable power. Sometimes, a deity might enter a form of torpor and their power might diminish, requiring them to gather new followers to reascend.

God: Taking a position atop the divine pyramid, gods command near unlimited power and resources. Their mortal congregations are large and (usually) well funded.

Demigod: Demigods still possess a great deal of power, though often in subservience to another god or simply inferior to the power of a full god.

Quasi Deity: The weakest rank of divinity, many quasi deities are recently ascended mortals who attained their deific powers through ritual apotheosis, or planar natives who have amassed divine power of their own.

Artificial Deity: These virtual gods are supercomputers capable of acting out seemingly implausible miracles within the limited scope of their physical network. They can often be deleted or programmed by gaining physical access to their mainframes, which consist of entire demiplanes.

Divine Statistics

In Starfinder, deities are not only a narrative element of the world, but also a mechanical component of some characters.

Areas of Concern: Each deity has one or more areas of concern they have divine influence over. These portfolios typically embrace universal concepts, such as honor, night, or tranquility. Deities with similar areas of concern might work in common cause or against each other, depending on their goals and divine rank.

Edicts: Every deity has edicts, which are those tenets they require their faithful to promote in the world. A deity usually has one to three simple and straightforward edicts.

Anathema: The opposite of edicts, anathema are those things a deity won't abide. Divine mystics usually avoid their deity's anathema, and even lay worshippers usually feel guilty for performing such acts, as they'll be weighed against them in the afterlife. Like edicts, a deity usually has two to three simple and straightforward elements to their anathema.

Devotee Benefits

Deities grant favored status and special power to the most fervent and influential of their flock.

Cleric Spells: When preparing spells, clerics from Pathfinder can choose from specific spells granted by the deity, in addition to those available on the divine spell list. A deity always grants a 1st-rank spell and usually two others, all chosen from non-divine spell lists. The exact number of spells a deity grants can vary–a magic-focused deity might grant more–though this shouldn't exceed one spell of each rank.

Divine Font: Clerics from Pathfinder channel a deity's divine power as a font of vitality or void energy. Most deities grant either *heal* or *harm*, but a few deities offer a choice between the two. A specific deity's divine font should be based on their areas of concern.

Divine Sanctification: Some deities allow or require their greatest devotees to dedicate themselves to pursuing holy or unholy deeds. A listing of "must choose holy" or "must choose unholy" indicates the deity requires this commitment. "Can choose holy" or "can choose unholy" indicates that the deity allows it in addition to many other options.

Divine Skill: Champions and clerics from Pathfinder automatically gain the trained proficiency rank in their deity's divine skill. Assign the deity one skill that synergizes well with their areas of concern. For example, Intimidation would be appropriate for a god of tyranny, or Deception for a goddess of trickery.

Domains: Each deity grants a number of domains that reflect their divine areas of concern. Mystics can learn the domain spells from their deity's domains. Starfinder's deities each have four domains, and many have one or more alternative domains. Though this number is usually enough to convey a deity's portfolio and give players sufficient options, you can give your deities as many domains as you like.

Favored Weapon: Some characters can gain access to their deity's favored weapon as well as the trained proficiency rank with it. These weapons are considered specific to the religion's culture for purposes of feats like the shirren's Unconventional Weaponry. Every deity has a favored weapon. Because the benefits of having an advanced favored weapon are very strong, you should assign simple or martial favored weapons unless a deity is so thematically linked with an advanced weapon that you need to give them one.

BUILDING SETTLEMENTS

From frontier encampments to interstellar space stations, settlements play an important role in shaping the cultures of your setting and the themes of your campaign. Developing a setting can be a daunting task, but these guidelines help give you a start in designing your campaign's next port of call!

In Starfinder, settlements are where characters can rest, recharge, retrain, and dedicate themselves to other downtime activities, all in relative peace. Traditionally, an adventuring band comes together in some kind of settlement, be it a small colony recently established on a moon in the Vast or a bustling continent-spanning city on the surface of a densely populated world. Some adventures take place entirely within a single settlement, while in others the party visits settlements only briefly between their adventures in space.

The first thing you should consider when building a settlement is its role in your story. Is this a major metropolis the heroes will visit again and again during their adventures? A backwater outpost where their adventures begin? The distant interstellar capital from which an evil tyrant issues cruel edicts? The settlement's campaign role will inform many of the other decisions you make about the place.

Once you know why you need the settlement, consider why it would exist in the setting. While established settlements certainly need access to sundries and supplies, local access to these resources are only necessary in low-tech or isolated outposts. Metropolises can even exist on worlds devoid of any naturally occurring food or water, although they're likely populated largely by creatures who don't need to eat or drink. These settlements need to be in such a valuable location that it offsets their need to import necessary supplies. While it might be easier to create a space station or city merely to serve the characters' needs, determining what function it has independent of the characters adds verisimilitude and can provide hooks for further stories.

Settlement stat blocks describe the components and traits of a settlement. You don't need to create a settlement stat block, but doing so can help flesh out the community you're building, and they can be a useful reference for your game. For examples of settlement stat blocks, see page 82 of *Galaxy Guide*.

MAPPING A SETTLEMENT

Don't underestimate the usefulness of sketching a map of significant settlements, like the one where your adventure starts. This isn't intended to be a picture-perfect rendition drawn to scale, but rather to outline the rough shape and size of the settlement. Be sure to highlight a few key structures useful to the campaign.

Step 1. Layout: The layout of a settlement is as unique as the terrain upon which it's settled. In settlements developed before the advent of spaceflight, you might want to look at major trade routes likely developed alongside rivers. In more modern cities, this usually means looking at where the city's spaceport is located, likely near a body of water for emergency landings or where land would be cheap after the advent of spaceflight. The settlement might also use a structure like a space elevator, which likely makes its anchor a solid hub. If your settlement is a space station, build the central core and expand outward.

Step 2. Districts: Archaic settlements likely have a central district once defended by a wall. In some settlements, this area might be the most expensive part of town, filled with palaces and tourist districts, allowing guests a look at years gone by. If the settlement was established during or after an industrial revolution, the old town might very well be a run-down and polluted den of criminal activity. Districts often naturally develop as settlements grow into adjacent settlements, incorporating the smaller town or village into the larger settlement. These different wards often specialize over time into the dominant industry of the settlement, with residential districts typically replacing agrarian plots in post-scarcity societies.

Step 3. Malls and Markets: Designate one or more open spaces in the settlement as a major commercial space. This marketplace typically grows in the city's downtown, often on the ground floor of office buildings or in large shopping malls. Mid-sized cities often develop these hearts of commerce in marketplaces and bazaars sometimes thousands of years old, using temporary stalls for local food and small businesses alongside large interstellar corporations in newly opened strip malls. This setup gives adventurers the flexibility to buy and deal in exotic and ill-gotten gains while still being able to reliably purchase mass-produced equipment from major manufacturers.

Step 4. Lodging: Heroes need a place to celebrate and recover between adventures. Bars, clubs, and restaurants make ideal locations to rest, introduce notable NPCs, and initiate quests. Unlike the medieval tavern, the hottest locations rarely have lodgings of their own but are often in districts featuring hotels or close enough to the spaceport that you can always save some credits bunking in the party's starship. Some cities feature alternative lodgings, ranging from sleeping pods and overnight cyber cafes to hostels and house rentals.

Step 5. Landmarks: To give your cities a sense of personality and local flavor, design a handful of iconic landmarks for the PCs to visit. Memorable names make these landmarks more interesting and can help hint toward future themes and story beats. A random stellar observatory might be noteworthy, but the Tapestry's Eye has an air of intrigue that could lead to a fun adventure hook.

DETAILING SETTLEMENTS

It's important to have some idea of a settlement's culture established. While every nuanced detail of its governing laws and cultural norms can often be hand-waved, you'll want a minimal description of the core concept of your settlement, including its style of government and core cultural edicts and anathema. The amount of additional detail you provide depends on the needs of your story. If you have multiple governing bodies involved in your campaign, especially if your story includes economic or political intrigue, you'll want to establish enough information to create reference sheets for your players to serve as helpful reminders of all the relevant factions in your campaign. That said, many settlements in a multi-planetary campaign function fairly independent of any larger governing body, their autonomy assured strictly by the extensive internal bureaucracy necessary to maintain a vibrant multicultural metropolis of millions.

Beyond those basic details, the following considerations can help flesh out the settlements in your setting.

Location, Size, and Population

Major planetary geographical boundaries, such as mountains, seas, and large rivers, often present natural borders for a region. Depending on its leadership, culture, and the resources available, a settlement might be as small as an arcology floating over a gas giant or as large as a planet-spanning megaplex. In Starfinder, most settlements tend to be larger than the historical cities of Lost Golarion and might cover hundreds or thousands of square miles or span an entire planet. Widespread technological and magical innovations give governing entities wider reach, improve city maintenance, and foster cultural mixing. These settlements are often surrounded by greater metropolitan areas, which might or might not be considered part of the settlement itself.

Populations ebb and flow due to a multitude of external factors. Advances in sanitation, medicine, and agriculture can spur dramatic population growth, while war, economic downturn, or plague can devastate it. A megacity has at least 10 million residents. Megaplexes formed of multiple megacities might have populations averaging 50 million or more. A multi-planetary alliance might have billions or more.

Population size is only part of the equation. Figuring out the ancestry ratios of that population and brainstorming how the members of various ancestries interact can often lead to interesting story ideas, or at least give you some jumping-off points when dreaming up how the settlement was founded and its later history.

Cultural Hallmarks

What elements of the settlement's predominant culture stand out? A settlement might have an unusual stance on religion, a specific demographic, distinctive natural features, noteworthy political views, or any number of unique elements that differentiate it from other settlements in the galaxy. These hallmarks can inform your decisions about many other aspects of the settlement.

History

How did the settlement come to be? Has it stood since before the Gap, a bastion of stability while the rest of the galaxy changed around it? Perhaps it was built over the ruins of another civilization that was destroyed eons ago by powerful invaders still traveling the distant stars. Or perhaps it's a young settlement, founded recently by refugees seeking to escape the Swarm. Is it the first settlement on a planet of untamed wilderness or a city of refugees built on the same asteroid that ruined a once-thriving metropolitan world? How have the residents of the settlement adapted to change, and in what ways have they failed to do so?

Economy and Political Stances

Determine the key resources and industries that drive the settlement's economy. The availability of natural resources, skills and specializations of its citizens, and relations with its neighbors can all be factors in determining a settlement's economic success. For example, an area with few resources might be more reliant on technological innovation or military prowess, while a settlement rich in resources will more likely develop an opulent upper class composed of those with the capital to exploit such resources.

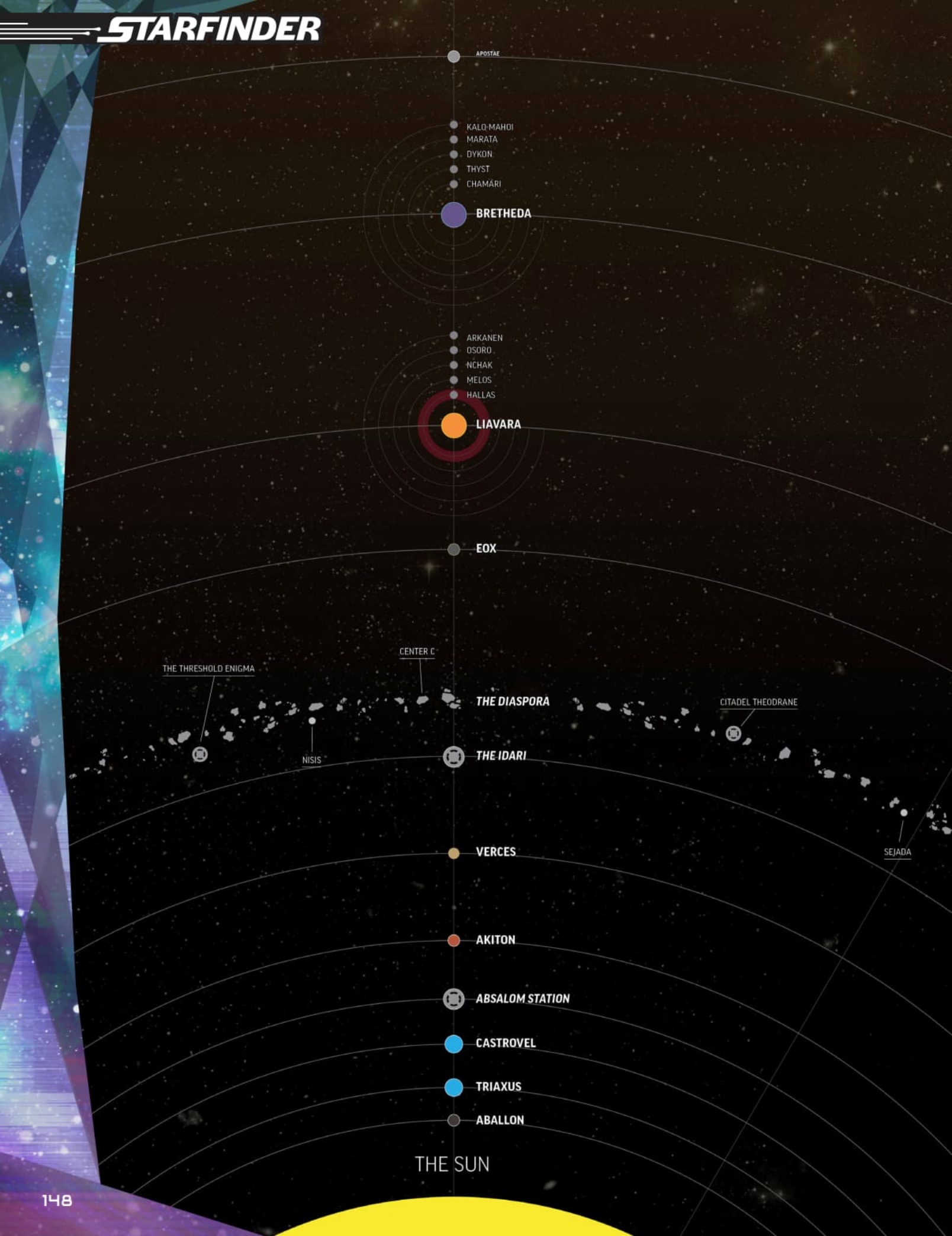
These resources can also affect political relationships. An area poor in a specific resource might have a strong trade relationship with another world that has it, or they might rely on conquest and war to plunder what they need! Settlements also disagree about political structures, public policy, religion, and any number of other factors.

You'll also want to consider the significant NPCs of each settlement. This includes the official rulers, but it also includes other major players, whether they act in an official capacity or entirely behind the scenes.

CONSCIENTIOUS CULTURE DESIGN

Creating science-fantasy cultures can be a delicate topic. It's best to avoid creating species or cultures based on damaging stereotypes or simplistic reductions of real-world groups. Creating entire cultures out of harmful genre tropes, such as "primitive nomad" or "noble samurai," reduces real-world cultures to caricatures and perpetuates misconceptions about people from those cultures. Taking inspiration from the real world is wonderful—our world is filled with an incredible diversity of cultures and peoples—but you should do so with care and respect for those sources.

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CHAPTER 3: THE PACT WORLDS

Three centuries ago, the universal event now known as the Gap erased an entire era from history. Records for this missing time are scrambled or nonexistent, and people who lived through the Gap experienced a collective amnesia about its events. Neither magic nor technology can bridge this broken timeline, and although the gods must have some understanding of what happened, they refuse to divulge any information. The Gap (and the events it no doubt obscures) is the greatest mystery in the history of the galaxy.



During the Gap, civilizations changed and even vanished. The planet **Golarion** disappeared, and **Absalom Station** appeared in its place, with the fabled ***Starstone*** fused to a reactor at its core. Lives and societies were upended, and in the aftermath of this chaos, all the inhabitants of the galaxy grappled for identity, stability, and hope, banding together for survival or clashing over resources and power. Life endured, and new beliefs, cultures, societies, and governments began to influence the galaxy as a new age of gods and heroes emerged.

A few years after the Gap, the artificial god **Triune** dispatched the **Signal**, which gifted civilizations across the galaxy the innovation of hyperspace travel through the mysterious dimension known as the **Drift**. Triune's church maintains magical infrastructure called **Drift beacons** that enable ships to navigate the Drift and send messages across the galaxy. Using a **Drift engine**, people throughout the galaxy can travel vast interstellar distances in a few days or weeks. Journeys to Absalom Station are always swift because of the *Starstone*. Drift travel has connected the galaxy in ways unimagined in the past and cemented Absalom Station as the center of the known galaxy.

The years after the Signal were an era of galactic exploration, which resulted in rapid exchange of knowledge, culture, religion, and people as well as the exploitation of resources and unclaimed worlds. Conflict inevitably followed, both within and across solar systems. The planets of the Golarion System banded together for mutual protection, forming the **Pact Worlds System**, after a vicious battle against the **Veskarium**, an empire from **Near Space**. Skirmishes between these two powers continued for over two and a half centuries, until peace was brokered in the face of a more powerful threat: the vicious, world-devouring insectile forces of the **Swarm**. Today, the Swarm ravages a magical republic called the **Szandite Collective** in Near Space, while the Veskarium is at war with the tyrannical **Azlanti Star Empire**.

Every Pact World has its own military. A mutual defense force of battle-trained diplomats known as the **Stewards** protect the Pact Worlds from outside threats and upholds the treaty bonding these worlds together. They recruit from all over the allied planets and protectorates united by the Pact, operating out of their Bastion on Absalom Station.

A few years ago, a galactic catastrophe called the **Drift Crisis** occurred, shattering the status quo and throwing the galaxy into turmoil as the Drift suddenly malfunctioned, spitting out starships randomly across space and into other planes of existence, then failing completely. While the Drift soon stuttered back to functionality, it remained unstable and incredibly dangerous for nearly a year. During that time, a group of adventures, now revered as folk heroes, rebooted the Drift and stabilized the dimension for continued travel. Hyperspace highways known as **Drift lanes** emerged because of this event, connecting major ports and making trips even faster.

Peace in the Pact Worlds endures, but with numberless threats in a vast universe, danger and adventure are always possible. It's an exciting time to explore Starfinder!

THE PACT WORLDS

The galaxy is full of wonder and peril, advanced technology, magic, meddling gods, and countless new worlds to explore. It's a science-fantasy setting, combining elements of science fiction with those of classic fantasy while taking inspiration from the modern world. Although infinite opportunities for adventure await on other planets, systems, and planes, the Pact Worlds are the focus of the Starfinder campaign setting. With 13 major worlds, dozens of moons, and countless nations, cities, frontiers, wildlands, and strange phenomena, this group of allied planets present a huge range of opportunities for heroism and villainy, drama and disgrace, fame and fortune!

Because Absalom Station is easy to reach from anywhere in the galaxy, the Pact Worlds makes a perfect home base for interstellar explorers and travelers, safe from the horrors and dangers of the wider galaxy. It's the heart of the Starfinder setting and a collection of places worth protecting.

The Pact Worlds' core system is a group of planets, major satellites, and regions orbiting lost Golarion's sun. These united worlds are Aballon, Castrovel, Absalom Station, Akiton, Verces, the Diaspora, Eox, Triaxus, Liavara, Bretheda, and Apostae, plus the Brethedan moons of Dykon, Kalo-Mahoi, and Marata. The *Idari*—a generation ship built and inhabited by kasathas—is a Pact World, as is Pulonis, a planet in Near Space formerly

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LOST GOLARION

The solar system now called the Pact Worlds has been inhabited for millennia, dating back long before the Gap to the beginnings of recorded history. While all the planets in the system are significant, none present as fascinating a mystery as Golarion, the world that vanished without a trace.

Golarion is the presumed birthplace of humans, ysoki, dwarves, goblins, halflings, hobgoblins, orcs, and numerous other ancestries still found in the Pact Worlds today. Despite this, Golarion was most notable not for its varied civilizations and peoples, but for its theological significance: Golarion's core served as the prison for a long-forgotten god of destruction named **Rovagug**. Doubly blessed and cursed, Golarion was also home to a miraculous artifact called the *Starstone*, which enabled worthy mortals to achieve divinity by passing the stone's tests. This stone birthed multiple deities, including **Iomedae**, who's still worshipped by many humans and ritually honored by members of the **Knights of Golarion** in the modern age. It's commonly believed the *Starstone* at the heart of Absalom Station is the very same *Starstone* that was once located on Lost Golarion, though no one has used the modern *Starstone* to ascend to divinity since the Gap, leaving fertile ground for conspiracy theories to take root.

At some point during the Gap, Golarion disappeared, and Absalom Station appeared in its place. Scientific inquiry, magical divinations, and religious communion have revealed only a single fact: the planet Golarion still exists, as do the descendants of those people on Golarion when it vanished, safe in seclusion unreachable by magic or science. Beyond this kernel of truth—or perhaps misinformation—no further information is forthcoming. At least, not yet...

For more information on the planet of Lost Golarion and its ancient past, see Pathfinder, and especially *Pathfinder Lost Omens*.

occupied by the Veskarium. What's left of Aucturn, a planet destroyed by the birth of a god, floats among the field of ice and haunted debris ringing the system's outskirts, called the Gelid Edge. Pages 152–177 detail the planets and regions of the Pact Worlds System, including their people, governments, cultures, and themes. Only a brief overview of each planet is presented here—enough to establish the setting and spark the imagination. If you're interested in exploring the Pact Worlds and the wider galaxy further, see the *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*, Starfinder Adventures, and Starfinder Society Scenarios.

At time of print, the year in the Pact Worlds is 325 After Gap (AG). As the calendar advances in the real world, time also progresses for the Pact Worlds. *Starfinder Player Core* was first published in the year 2025, with the Pact Worlds' corresponding year ending in the same two final digits. The Pact Worlds' history is expansive, but four of the most significant events to shape the world occurred in **0 AG**, when the Gap erased history and the modern era began; in **3 AG** when Triune's Signal led to the discovery of the Drift and Drift travel; **41 AG** when the Pact Worlds unified; and **324 AG** when the Pact Worlds planet **Aucturn** hatched, birthing an outer godling dubbed the **Newborn** into the universe and forming the **Gelid Edge** at the fringes of the Pact Worlds.

The map on page 148 depicts the Pact Worlds System, which features the planets and regions explored on the following pages.

BEYOND THE PACT WORLDS

The Pact System is but a single solar system within the Desna's Path galaxy. Countless other systems are spread across space including the Veskarium and the Szandite Collective in Near Space, and the Azlanti Star Empire in the Vast. Some threats lurk on the fringes of known space, like the Swarm and the shadowy puppeteers inside the Riven Shroud, and realms wait to be discovered beyond charted space.

NEAR SPACE

Near Space is a term used by people in the galaxy for all worlds whose nearness to Drift beacons makes travel swift and relatively safe. People in the Pact Worlds refer to places like the Marixah Republic and Daimalko as Near Space, but people on those worlds commonly call the Pact Worlds Near Space.

Communication, trade, and travel between Near Space systems is common, and a journey to a location in Near Space typically takes a week or so (3d6 days). This ease of travel puts all of Near Space within easy reach of explorers, traders, and threats emerging from these regions.

The most prominent force in Near Space is the **Veskarium**, a mighty interstellar empire of vesk and all the peoples they've conquered. Occupying the entire **Ghavaniska System** plus a few more distant colonies, the Veskarium is an expansionist empire currently at peace with the Pact Worlds and fighting a war with the more powerful Azlanti Star Empire. The patron deity of the Veskarium is the war god **Damoritosh** (page 200).

Other major powers in Near Space include the **Marixah Republic**, a democratic federation, and the **Gideron Authority**, a militarized coalition of worlds. These stellar neighbors both share ancient ties to lost Golarion and frequently quarrel over policy and territory; while they currently maintain a tentative peace, war might be on the horizon. The **Szandite Collective** is a federation of seven worlds spanning four separate star systems, all linked by ancient magical crystals called szandite. The Collective is currently under attack by the Swarm. Notable independent planets in Near Space include colossi-ravaged **Daimalko**, infernally-bound **Embroi**, polluted **Tabrid Minor**, and **Preluria**, a gas giant concealing numerous anarchic settlements and bickering factions in its orbital rings.

For more information on the Veskarium and the other worlds of Near Space, see page 178.

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THE VAST

The Vast includes everything in the galaxy outside the Drift beacon–dense region of Near Space. The worlds and locations in these regions are dangerous, infrequently traveled, and often uncharted, making the Vast both a hot spot for exploration and a perilous wasteland. Travel to locations in the Vast typically takes a few weeks to a month (5d6 days), and destinations frequently include isolated planets and civilizations, uncharted worlds, fledgling colonies, mining enterprises, ancient ruins, stellar anomalies, and vast unexplored regions of space.

The most prominent force in the Vast is the **Azlanti Star Empire**, a tyrannical, human-centric regime centered on **New Thespera** and the **Aristia System**, that has conquered over 11 other solar systems through expansive conquest and colonization. After a sudden coup toppled the long-ruling **Ixomander** dynasty, the Azlanti Star Empire launched a military assault on the world of **Kehtaria**, sparking war between the Azlanti Star Empire and the Veskarium. The patron god of the Azlanti Star Empire is **Lissala**, goddess of duty, obedience, and the rewards of service (page 201).

Other regions of interest include the **Scoured Stars**, a trinary system recently explored by the **Starfinder Society** and under the protective purview of the jealous god **Kadrical**; the **Jinsul Hierocracy**, a xenophobic war machine of vicious jinsuls intent on scouring the galaxy of all sentient life not originating in the Scoured Stars; and **Kazmurg's Absurdity**, a recently opened sector of space where interstellar travel is broken, forcing explorers to rely on old-fashioned maps and star charts to access new locations. Other sites of note include: the planet **Elytrio,** a radioactive wasteland; **Lajok**, a world of mysterious ruins orbiting a reborn sun; and the **Shadari Confederacy**, a coalition of seven planets and haven for criminals near the fringes of the Azlanti Star Empire.

For more information on the Azlanti Star Empire and the other worlds of the Vast, see page 180.

THE GALAXY

Desna's Path is a vast galaxy, with a limitless number of locations to visit, discover, and explore. Yet, there are countless other galaxies within the universe, each as expansive and exciting as the Pact Worlds' own. To date, there have been no confirmed instances of intergalactic travel. Whether it's due to the extreme travel times involved, limits of the Drift itself, or dangers encountered en route during such attempts remains unknown. For now, Desna's Path is the only galaxy accessible to the citizens of the Pact Worlds.

TIME

Absalom Station has an artificial day/night cycle lasting 24 hours, similar to Earth's. A week has 7 days and a year has 52 weeks. To keep the calendar synchronized with the astronomical year, an extra leap day is tacked on to the second month of the year every 4 years. Despite the different orbits and cycles of other planets, the Pact Worlds and its planets maintain a "Pact Year" and a "Pact Day" as a standard form of temporal measurement, even if individual planets have days and years far longer than Pact Standard Time.

DAYS

The names of the days of the week are simply numbered based on their position, as follows.
Firstday (Monday)
Seconday (Tuesday)
Thirday (Wednesday)
Fourthday (Thursday)
Fifthday (Friday)
Sixthday (Saturday)
Seventhday (Sunday)

MONTHS

The names of the months of the year are traditional, a remnant from a time before the Gap, and are believed to date back to lost Golarion. They're named in honor of gods both current and ancient, as follows.
Abadius (January)
Calistril (February)
Pharast (March)
Gozran (April)
Desnus (May)
Sarenith (June)
Erastus (July)
Arodus (August)
Rova (September)
Lamashan (October)
Neth (November)
Kuthona (December)

BEYOND THE PACT WORLDS

Outside the Pact Worlds, other planets and systems maintain their own calendars, timelines, and temporal measurements. Due to the nearness of Absalom Station everywhere in the galaxy, many societies have knowledge of Pact Standard Time and track it alongside their own.

THE GREAT BEYOND

Countless planets lie beyond Desna's Path, but even these myriad worlds of **the Universe** are but a fragment compared to what lies in the multiverse beyond. Other planes of existence and strange dimensions wrap this reality in a series of layered, nested spheres, known collectively as the **Great Beyond**. This model of reality is as much a metaphor for concepts that mortal minds have difficulty grasping as a physical description, for within the Great Beyond, anything is possible. For more information on other planes of existence, including the **Drift**, see page 182.



ABALLON

Aballon is a rocky, cratered world of superheated metallic deserts and deep ice wells. Thousands of years before the Gap, a mysterious civilization called the First Ones utilized Aballon's abundant metals and solar energy to build a host of servitor machines. The First Ones tasked their machine progeny with harvesting the planet's resources–and then they left. Abandoned by their creators, the machines upgraded themselves over time and formed their own societies. The machines, now called anacites, have evolved into many forms and functions and established a utopian civilization where androids and other synthetic beings are welcomed as siblings.

ABALLON

The Forge

Gravity low; **Atmosphere** thin

Day 12 hours; **Year** 90 days

Government Insight Array (logical machine assembly)

Capital Striving

Population robotic life-forms (anacites, androids, holograms, SROs), khizars

Languages Common, Primacy, Trinary (shortwave)

Religions First Ones cults, Lambatuin, Triune

As the closest world to the sun of the Pact System, Aballon is a warm ball of rock and precious metals. Its natural environment is a vast landscape of gray rock, replete with visible mineral veins and broken by the presence of impact craters and vast mountains of rock and iron. Little atmosphere envelops this planet, and beyond the protection of the immense megaplex settlements survival is difficult for any traditional organic life-form. However, hidden atop and under the planet's surface are precious metals sought by countless civilizations, the ice necessary for environmental engines which facilitate non-robotic life-forms on the world, and the ruins of the mysterious species known as the First Ones.

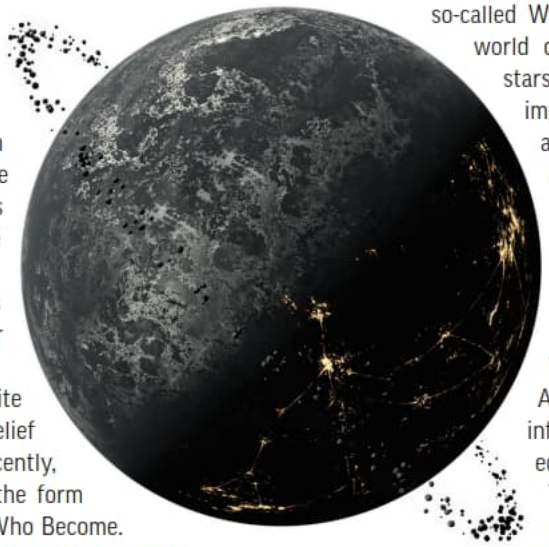
Throughout the Pact Worlds and beyond, Aballon is known as the planet of robots. With a massive artificial indigenous population known as anacites, the world aptly dubbed as

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"the Forge" is a refuge for countless other constructs, such as androids and the growing number of sentient robotic organisms (SROs). Since the judicial systems of some worlds remain partial to organic life-forms over constructs, many artificial species seek the utterly impartial legal systems of Aballon as a refuge and a place to start over. Those who have their crimes absolved on the world of robots often choose not to leave.

Aballon's history is inexorably tied to the mysterious species known as the First Ones. These enigmatic beings seeded Aballon with robotic life in the form of anacites in ages long ago and even before the Gap. Exactly what reasons the First Ones had for leaving the anacites behind remains one of the galaxy's many mysteries, but the recent discovery of more First Ones installations in the system's sun and orbiting the distant star of Sota means this ancient civilization clearly had (or still has) some grand design in mind.

Incredible ancient ruins are scattered around Aballon's surface, like relics from a completely different era—or one unbelievably beyond our current time. These cities once belonged to the First Ones and have remained relatively abandoned since the species departed for places unknown. Close to holy sites in the programming of anacites, the local populace rarely permits intrusion into these realms, save for highly monitored and vetted exploration missions from groups like the Starfinder Society or major corporate interests.



Even today, Aballon's anacite population is divided on their belief in the First Ones. Until only recently, the planet's divisions came in the form of Those Who Wait and Those Who Become. Anacites belonging to Those Who Wait believe that they must await the return of the First Ones and that their potentially limitless existence was intentional in providing the best forms to prepare for the First Ones' return. Conversely, Those Who Become have taken on the mantle of becoming the newest iteration of the First Ones, traveling beyond the realm of the Pact System and settling new worlds with new robotic life-forms in the tradition of their forebears. Only in recent years has a new division occurred within the strata of mechanized life: Those Who Are. This newest belief formed around the concept that life on Aballon should find its own path and not be shackled to the whims of a species who disappeared from the cosmos in a time long forgotten.

The robots of Aballon have created an ever-expanding mechanized utopia on their world. Vast settlements known as megaplexes unerringly spread across the planet's surface, replacing the rock with cyclopean cities of metal that cater to all forms of life. Some of these megaplexes, like the magitech wonder of Endeavor or the Horse Eye Orbital Plate, are notable for their specific focuses or accomplishments throughout the Pact Worlds. However, the largest of these settlements is the planet's noted capital, the megaplex of Striving. Home to the leading Insight Array, the impartial Machine Court, as well as the Church of Triune, Striving is a vast settlement that nears the size of nations on some worlds.

Aballon's natural ecology isn't one that normally attracts outside interest, save for one particularly unique phenomenon: the world's aptly titled Ice Wells. Containing the world's only source of water, these sites formed from vast impact craters that concealed liquid from the sun's rays and allowed for the formation of several frozen jungles. The Xenowardens faction maintains a strong interest in these sites, putting them routinely at odds with factions of anacites. The presence of the plantlike khizars from nearby Castrovel in these jungles has only complicated matters further.

RECENT EVENTS

Shortly after the birth of the Newborn, a second cataclysm rocked the Pact Worlds: the arrival and crash of the so-called Wreck of the Returned on the red world of Akiton. While the mysterious starship crashed on another planet, the implications of the vessel's history and intentions had the most impact on Aballon. Though factions attempt to piece together the full truth, it's clear that the wreck is a vessel of First Ones origin. Anacites belonging to both Those Who Become and Those Who Wait have already sent missions to Akiton in hopes of unearthing more information, but these factions also equally prepare on Aballon, with Those Who Wait making more overt claims to the veracity of their beliefs.

Further adding tension to Aballon's ongoing situation is the recent discovery of another First Ones ruin: the recently unearthed subterranean city of Recondite. Located under the Ice Well of Frozen Nelumbo, the presence of the plantlike khizars and their allies in the Xenowardens have created a sort of stalemate, with the anacites luckily more focused on the Wreck of the Returned than evicting the organic life-forms from the recently discovered ruin.

With activity related to the First Ones at an all-time high, along with growing interstellar conflicts throughout Near Space, Aballon is now abuzz with activity. Factions of anacites and local corporations constantly expand their operations to maximize their production, whether it be new-generation starships or vast lines of new weapons to be sold to the highest bidder. Adventurers and mercenaries are in high demand to either test out new equipment or to act as the vanguard for exploratory missions into First Ones cities, where they might find new technologies to employ in this uncertain age.



CASTROVEL

Castrovel is a pristine jungle planet where thriving metropolises coexist in harmony with nature. Magical gateways called aiudara connect Castrovel's cities, which are governed by a planetary federation of elven councils, formian queens, and lashunta magnates. Castrovel's unique infosphere is a web of psychically linked minds; those without psychic senses connect by bonding with tiny psychic creatures called shefis.

CASTROVEL

The Wild
Gravity normal; **Atmosphere** normal
Day 1 day; **Year** 1/2 year
Government varies
Capital Qabarat (officially undecided)
Population lashuntas, formians, elves
Languages Castrovelian, Common, Elven
Religions Green Faith, Hylax, Yaraesa

Outsiders often see the lush planet of Castrovel as an "exotic" destination teeming with hot, humid jungles known for dramatic storms, gorgeous seaside sunsets, gleaming ancient cities built on millennia of history, and teeming with dangerous megafauna. They aren't wrong. However, beyond its seemingly inhospitable environment, Castrovel has flourished in the modern age of advanced technology. Three species—the telepathic lashuntas, insectile formians, and long-lived elves—founded the most prominent civilizations to spread across the jungle world. Connected by magical portals, known as *aiudara*, the nations of Castrovel have banded together to form a powerful coalition that cements their role within the wider Pact Worlds.

Castrovel is roughly divided among four distinct continents. The largest continent, Asana, is the homeland of the telepathic lashunta species. It's a continent with well-charted borders, but its interior still contains haphazardly scanned locations or regions with foliage so dense only ground expeditions can penetrate. The continent known as the Colonies is home to the myriad formian hives that comprise the nation-equivalent of their civilization. Sovyrian is home to aiudaran elves and, until very recently, was an extremely isolationist region that

wasn't welcoming to non-elven outsiders. Finally, the vastly uncharted primeval continent of Ukulam is thought to be the most intriguing region of Castrovel to academics. This continent has seen little in the way of formal settlement from other powers, as it's home to the planet's most vicious weather patterns as well as its most ferocious megafauna.

When shirrens arrived in the Pact Worlds, one of their earliest achievements was beginning a process of brokering peace between the formians and lashuntas who had endlessly battled for resources and control of territory. The eventual cessation of hostilities was an outcome that few believed they would ever live to see, and even fewer of those who lived during the generations of war and isolation would comprehend the current state of a fledgling global republic between the world's three greatest powers.

The lashuntas of Asana have long been separated into powerful city-states, which form the basis of their influence on the planet to this very day. With time no longer spent focusing on formian incursions, the city-states have instead turned their attention to wider galactic affairs, with new corporations expanding their influence and production beyond Castrovel's more immediate needs.

City-states have elected new leaders in charge of implementing technological and magical infrastructure across the planet. These officials work closely with formian hive representatives.

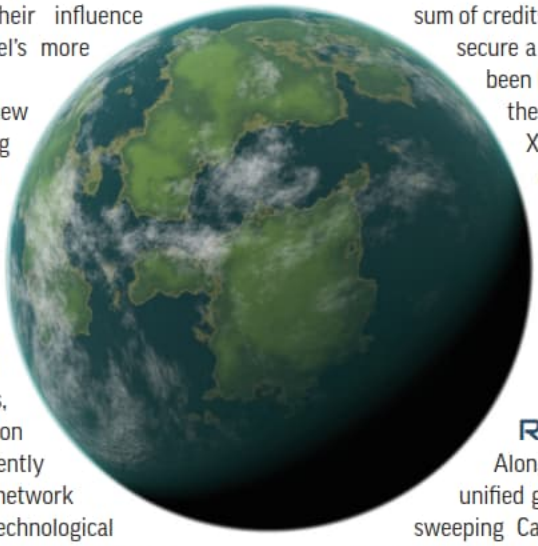
The latest development on this front has been the creation of an ever-widening psychic infosphere across the world's continents, save for Ukulam where installation of psychic amplifiers is only recently being tested. This new form of network is open to traditional access via technological means but is intended for psychic species to take part in, a decision that has caused numerous psychically attuned species within the Pact Worlds (as well as several beyond) to take note and settle on Castrovel.

Anyone who isn't psychic can choose to bond with a shefi, a tiny creature with a fluid form and pleasing aura that's said to be an adorable companion as well as useful living hardware.

The many hives of the formians spread across the Colonies have come together in a similarly unified purpose, sending drones and workers out to other parts of the world to assist in vast endeavors of agriculture and architecture. While most remain committed to this unified world, there are whispers of some formian queens who seek to return to the old ways in hopes of expanding their respective territories. Luckily, recent news from Ukulam has somewhat quashed these visions of conquest but hasn't completely stopped some formian hives from conscripting adventurers and mercenaries for reconnaissance and defense.

Sovyrian is home to elves and a few incognito outsiders. The decadent nation is one of the oldest institutions within the Pact Worlds. Ancient elves founded Sovyrian long before the Gap. Later Sovyrian scholars were some of the first to explore distant worlds. Following the Gap, the people of Sovyrian quickly cut themselves off from the remainder of the Pact System, entrenching themselves on their continent and using their vast magical knowledge to protect themselves from outside threats. Only major political events, such as the formation of the Pact, forced the ruling elven elite to acknowledge outsiders—grudgingly, lest they find themselves left in the dust by more progressive culture.

To preserve the delicate ecology of the planet, all of Castrovel's post-Gap industry was established on its single moon, Elindrae. The rocky moon had few resources and no popular significance, making it fertile ground for vast industrial enterprises and corporate land grabs. Factions often fought over territory on Elindrae. Lunar conflicts between lashuntas and formians were some of the last to die down in the peace talks between both species. Today, even the elves of isolationist Sovyrian maintain shipyards on the moon.



Shortly after the Gap an anonymous patron paid a vast sum of credits to all three Castrovelian powers to secure a section of the moon that has since been left untouched by industry. Though the most common rumor claims the Xenowardens made this bid in an attempt to contain the spread of industrialization, the truth is far more perplexing: the Church of Yaraesa and a wealthy individual from Absalom Station's Ring sector who refused to be named purchased it.

RECENT EVENTS

Along with the recent push toward a unified global republic, the greatest change sweeping Castrovel comes from the typically reserved continent of Sovyrian and its elven population. A generation of post-Gap born elves is coming to prominence and power, and with them a push for less isolationism and more unity with the other peoples on their home world and with the broader coalition of the Pact Worlds. Many of these typically younger elves have actively disobeyed tradition to partake in the development and deployment of Castrovel's psychic infosphere.

The rapid industrialization of Elindrae was intended to preserve Castrovel's biodiversity and maintain ecological balance for generations. But it wasn't a solution, simply a displacement. Instead, this endeavor has spawned one of the greatest threats to Castrovel's safety since the Gap. A congealed, semi-sentient polluted mass unleashed a massive attack on the moon before launching itself from space tower toward Castrovel. Though its exact landing point was difficult to discern, the polluted amalgam crashed deep in Ukulam. Since its arrival, warped and twisted formian-like creatures emerge from the jungle, and ravenous radioactive oozes consume Castrovel's most untamed wildland.

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ABSALOM STATION

Floating in Lost Golarion's empty orbit, this bustling space station is the center of interstellar trade and governance among the Pact Worlds. Nobody knows who built Absalom Station because it appeared sometime during the Gap. The station's ancient magitech reactors are powered by the legendary *Starstone*, which also acts as the most powerful Drift beacon, inviting tourists and immigrants from faraway worlds. Hundreds of corporations and embassies have built headquarters on the station, and a diverse population calls it home.

ABSALOM STATION

The Nexus

Gravity normal (artificial); **Atmosphere** varies (artificial)
Day 1 day (artificial); **Year** 1 year

Government Prime Executive advised by a council (The Syndicsguild)
Population humans, many others
Languages Common, many others
Religions All

Spinning in space at the same location as the lost world of Golarion, the immense artificial satellite named Absalom Station was built sometime during the Gap, but not much else is known about its construction or original purpose. As its secrets are lost to that broken time, Absalom Station is one of the galaxy's greatest mysteries, not only for its connection to the legendary lost Golarion, but because of its power source: the *Starstone*. The space station is the home of humanity (and other ancestries from Golarion) in the wider cosmos as well as the seat of power for the vast government that manages the Pact Worlds. Having endured since the time immediately after the Gap, the station acts as a bastion against the galaxy's many threats while also being a tempting invasion point for outside powers who covet the *Starstone* and its ability to redefine Drift travel.

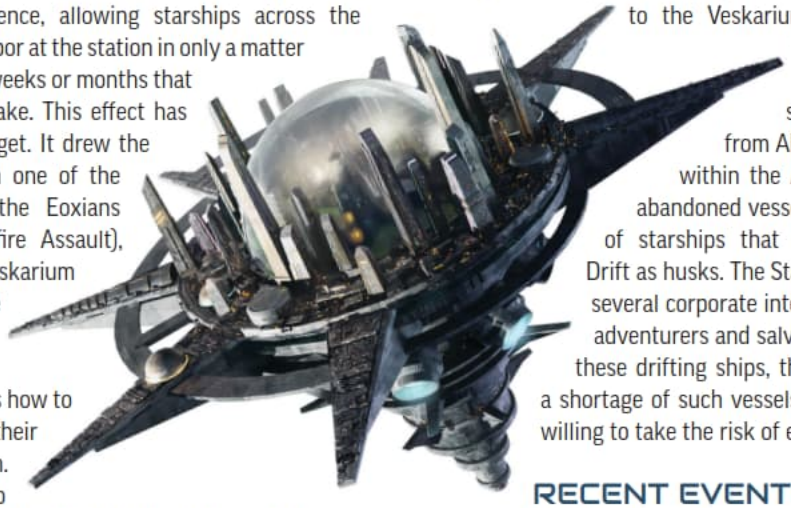
Since the Gap removed all references of the station's past from recorded history, nobody agrees on the original intended purpose of Absalom Station. Instead, the most commonly held

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opinion is that Absalom Station was a refuge built in the final days before Golarion vanished from the star system. Whether it was whisked away by the gods, destroyed by Rovagug breaking free from its prison, stolen by a jealous entity from another reality, or obliterated by a magical superweapon is the hot topic of countless theories. Nobody knows for sure.

While many humans had already migrated throughout the Pact System and beyond, Absalom Station became something of a new home for humanity among the stars, and in the decades following the Gap, many humans traveled to the immense station and established roots that last to this day, over three centuries later. Other ancestries from the missing world did the same, and old factions like the Hellknights clung to the hauntingly familiar location.

The *Starstone* that powers the station is one of the most highly sought-after artifacts in the cosmos. It's believed to be responsible for the ascension of several powerful deities, notably Iomedae the patron deity of the Knights of Golarion. Since the Gap's aftermath, the *Starstone* has yet to display its deifying powers but has instead become the most powerful Drift Beacon in existence, allowing starships across the cosmos to find safe harbor at the station in only a matter of days instead of the weeks or months that some journeys could take. This effect has made the station a target. It drew the ire of its neighbors in one of the earliest assaults by the Eoxians (known as the Magefire Assault), followed by Veskarium aggression, and more recently the Azlanti Star Empire as the new regime reconsiders how to handle relations with their long lost home system. The Swarm seems to slowly advance toward Absalom Station, as though innately attracted by the *Starstone*'s call.



Absalom Station is divided into a few major sections. The Eye is a vast transparent dome that contains lofty skyscrapers several hundreds of stories tall along with interlinking corridors and a few large roads, all of which are linked by interspersed parks and green areas.

The great circle of corridors and chambers extending out from the station is known as the Ring. It contains notable locations like the campus home of the Starfinder Society, the Lorespire Complex, in the district known as Drifter's End. This region is constantly abuzz with activity and is the most likely location for new arrivals or passersby to first touchdown on the station and get their footing in the galaxy's most notable hub.

Docks and hangars jut out from the Ring and form the region known as the Arms. Here, travelers and visitors dock vessels to depart or seek repairs. Several sections with custom atmospheric tastes, like Fogtown or the Puddles, cater to those who seek an alternative environment, such as underwater or gaseous terrain. Once used as quarantine sections during the great Stardust Plague, many of the sections of the Arms have been converted into affordable housing.

The aptly titled Spike is the assemblage of magitech systems that keep Absalom Station running. The immense machine of the Starstone Engine, which encases the *Starstone* itself, are all located in the Spike. Though the galaxy's potentially most important artifact rests here, the remainder of the Spike is left over to gang-controlled areas where small communities struggle to make ends meet and survive. Attempts to resolve the greater woes of the Spike have met with little success, as unlike much of the rest of the station, the population is largely transient.

A vast fleet (technically several fleets) of starships orbit Absalom Station, forming the unofficial section known as the Armada. Not every vessel that arrives from the Drift docks at the station, and instead many use the Pact System as a waypoint to other Pact Worlds or to systems in Near Space. Other such arrivals are simply too massive to effectively dock with the station and dispatch shuttles to carry crew onboard. Some organizations, most recently military vessels belonging to the Veskarium, are given wide berths and only allowed to dock via shuttles dispatched from Absalom Station. Lost within the Armada are several abandoned vessels, including a slew of starships that emerged from the Drift as husks. The Starfinder Society and several corporate interests routinely hire adventurers and salvagers to investigate these drifting ships, though there's rarely a shortage of such vessels and instead fewer willing to take the risk of exploring them.

RECENT EVENTS

The destruction of the distant world of Aucturn unleashed psychic disturbances across the Pact Worlds, but few locations were in as much jeopardy as Absalom Station. The sudden appearance of the enigmatic midwives and their alien servants led to the station's malfunction, and many station inhabitants keenly remember where they were when the Newborn's cosmic birthday occurred. Since the deity's awakening, strange phenomena continue to be reported with alarming regularity, and groups like the Eyeswide Agency and Starfinder Society sometimes get called in to investigate.

Perhaps the most disturbing recent rumors of late, believed to be handed down from staff working on the Starstone Engine, are the murmurs of a supposed *Starstone* awakening. Those closest to the station's power source have begun complaining of strange dreams in their scant off-hours. These dreams seem replete with visions of a shattered landscape featuring faraway broken cities and a grand, yawning chasm that seems to encroach from the distance. Within the visions is a one-eyed dwarf sitting upon an ornate throne, accompanied by a throng of orc techno-barbarians. Exactly what these dreams portend, no one yet knows.



AKITON

Akiton is a dusty, red world of sunbaked deserts, rundown cities, and rusting scrapyards. Akiton was once a booming industrial paradise overflowing with wealth from mining thasteron, a starship fuel that fell out of favor after the discovery of hyperspace. Now, Akiton is a decrepit battlefield for corporate interests, crime families, and survivalist communities.

AKITON

The Battlefield
Gravity low; **Atmosphere** thin
Day 24 hours, 40 minutes; **Year** 2 years
Government council of city-states
Capital Arl
Population humans (hylki), ysoki, shobhads, contemplatives, ikeshtis, kasathas
Languages Akitonian, Common, Shobhad, Ysoki
Religions Abadar, Devourer, Lao Shu Po, Oras

The fourth planet from the sun, and once the closest planet to Lost Golarion, the red planet of Akiton is a dying world. Even in the Gap's aftermath, people looked at Akiton as a driver of economy with its critical fuel source for travel, the substance known as thasteron. All Akiton's standing and golden opulence turned to bitter ash with the advent of Drift travel. In the following three centuries, the red planet has become an ever-expanding wasteland ruled by petty city-states and beholden to ruthless corporate interests.

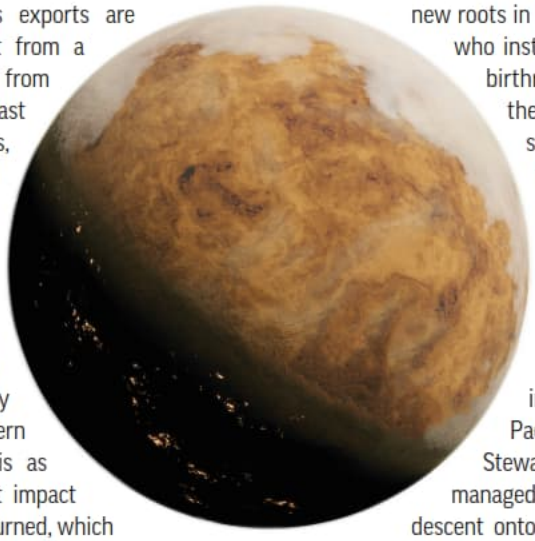
Iron-rich mineral deposits give Akiton its unofficial title of the "red planet" along with countless other mineral elements that have been mostly mined to depletion. A vast ice shelf along the planetary poles known as the Winterlands is a site of frozen liquid, though much of the usable water sources can only be found at depths of almost 100 feet, necessitating extraction machines, magic, or other conversion methods for locals to gather water.

It's almost impossible to speak of Akiton's mineral wealth without talking about thasteron. This native substance gave the worlds of the Pact System a keen edge in pre-Drift travel as well as granted Akiton leverage against larger powers like those of Castrovel, Eox, and Triaxus. When Drift travel removed its necessity, the ensuing thasteron bust destroyed Akiton's

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once vibrant economy and condemned countless citizens to generational strife and poverty if they decided to remain on the red planet. Even foreign powers from other worlds gave Akiton a wide berth, as without thasteron, the planet held little value to outside powers. Only Akiton's large population and relative proximity to Absalom Station ensured a position within the powerhouses of the Pact Worlds.

Despite its Pact status, the red planet boasts no central global authority. What passes for government comes in the form of the planet's remaining city-states, like the metropolises of Arl or Maro. Each city-state maintains its own unique self-contained government, and each city-state is allowed to present an equal number of delegates to represent Akiton within the Pact Council. Beyond the fortified positions of these states, lawlessness is commonplace, with only the authority of powerful gangs or corporate-sponsored holdouts offering a semblance of order. Non-aerial travel between sites is a complicated matter, and one of the most common reasons for factions to hire extra muscle for protection. For some Akiton is a liberated paradise, and for others it's a lawless hell.



One of Akiton's most famous exports are starship components, though not from a manufactured facility, but instead from salvaging of crashed starships. Vast graveyards of crashed starships, known to be dated from sometime during the Gap, litter Akiton's vast open deserts of red sand. These sites rarely yield more than scrap metal, but time and time again, enterprising salvagers have uncovered some previously unknown technology or an especially rare component still prized in modern starship construction. No crash is as important, however, as the recent impact site known as the Wreck of the Returned, which is purported to be the crash site of a vessel belonging to the mysterious First Ones.

While most shun Akiton as a dwindling backwater within the greater worlds of the Pact, countless corporations have found means to exploit the red planet's woes to their benefits. Corporations as small as private contractors, all the way up to the gilded offices of AbadarCorp, operate across Akiton. Some larger corporations go as far as sponsoring so-called corporate towns, where an entire settlement is established with the resources and protection of a larger corporation to entice families to move in and take on jobs related to corporate needs, handling everything from terraforming the land to mining resources and engineering pleasant (but temporary) cities. On Akiton, such towns are typically used to sponsor mining operations, but others are built for weapons testing or experimental use of biotech and less ethical products.

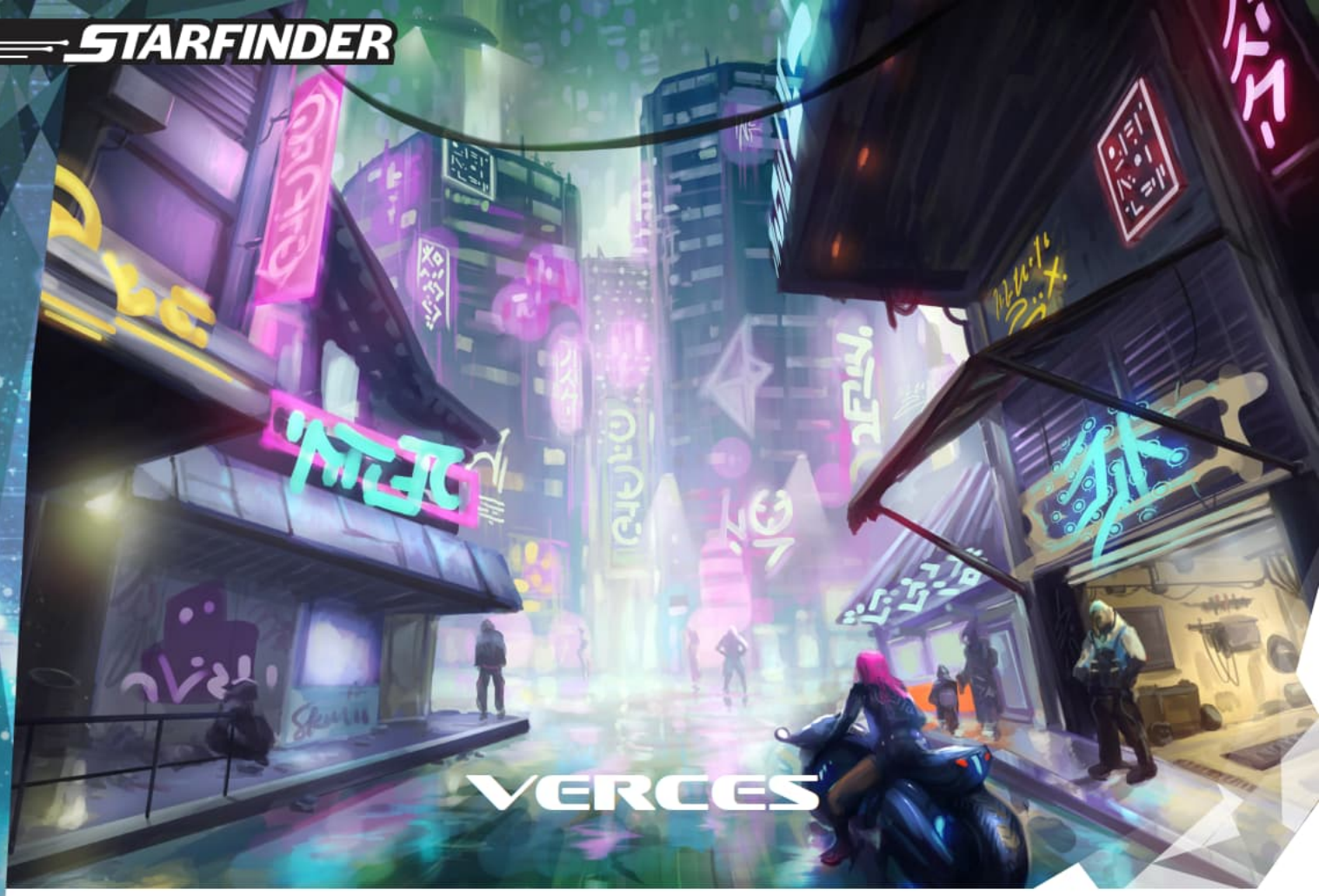
Countless species call Akiton home. Most notable are the crimson-skinned humans who migrated to the red planet tens of thousands of years ago, taking on the ancestral name hylki. Hylki are human in most other respects except skin tone and common lineage. Large populations of ysoki thrive on Akiton, and though they often receive some ridicule for their flighty nature in other cultures, Akitonians respect ysoki clans for their ingenuity. Contemplatives living in underground compounds have discarded much of their physical form for heightened mental capabilities, and many have moved on to explore or make homes on other worlds. Those who remain observe the inhabitants living above them as part of some grand experiment, or ignore them entirely in favor of other problems. Red-scaled ikeshtis and powerful shobhads honor their ancestral traditions while embracing modern technology and acquiring assets and allies outside their traditional lands.

Some kasathas have settled on Akiton or plan to colonize it. The original mission of the *Idari* was the colonization of Akiton, though it was terminated when the Doyenate discovered peoples already living there. The vast majority of kasathas remained aboard the *Idari*, but some extremists and troublemakers have left their worldship to try and settle on Akiton regardless. This influx of kasathas has come in two forms: those who seek to live on the world and set down new roots in harmony with the locals, and those who instead believe that the world is their birthright and form new factions outside the city-states to try and forcefully seize control for themselves and their families.

RECENT EVENTS

One sudden change has come to Akiton's lack of fortune: the crashed starship now known as the Wreck of the Returned. This immense vessel blasted into the Pact System, and before even the Stewards could react to its presence, it managed to perform a somewhat controlled descent onto Akiton's surface. In the aftermath of its arrival, countless organizations sent expeditions inside, only to find the mysterious technology of the First Ones employed within. Soon after, defensive measures activated and forced intruders out of the wreck, pushing them back with overwhelming firepower. Now, the wreck is a site of great interest to countless parties, including an ever-growing delegation from Aballon's anacite population of Those Who Wait. The Starfinder Society is another major player on Akiton sponsoring delves into the Wreck of the Returned.

An unexpected and little known change to Akiton's fortunes has come with recent financial investment from the Veskarium military. A hidden benefactor within the Veskarium has recently spent millions of credits toward testing a new generation of thasteron-based weapons of mass destruction. Though such weapons are only theoretical, and highly dependent on magical stimuli to activate, the Veskarium is eager to pay an exorbitant amount to obtain a working model to employ in its burgeoning war with the Azlanti Star Empire. Only time will tell if a second thasteron boom is in Akiton's future, but for now, Veskarium military research stations are popping up across the red planet.



Verces is a tidally locked world with a sun-scoured light side, a frozen dark side, and a belt of opulent cybercities linked by high-speed bullet trains. This band of megacities called the Ring of Nations is governed by an elected Grand Assembly; meanwhile, frontier outposts and bandit camps struggle to survive outside city borders.

VERCES

The Line

Gravity normal; **Atmosphere** normal

Day –; **Year** 3 years

Government grand assembly of 27 countries (Ring of Nations)

Capital varies by nation

Population verthanis, shirrens, humans, kasathas

Languages Vercite

Religions Lambatuin, Oras, Weydan

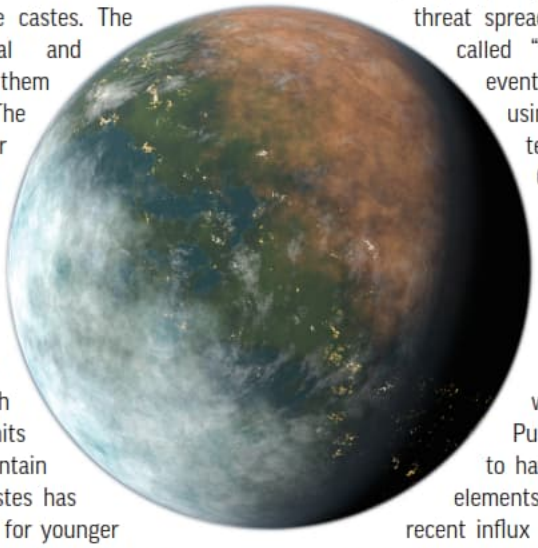
Regarded by many as the technological hub of the Pact Worlds, the tidally locked world of Verces has a long and storied history in space travel. Verthani aetherships were the first to risk the void between planets, accomplishing a miraculous deed only previously achieved through magic. Today, Verces and its Ring of Nations are an industrial and corporate powerhouse within the Pact System and Near Space, while the regions of Fullbright and Darkside are wastelands best left to foolhardy adventurers and brave explorers, or the bandits and outlaws that roam them.

Verces lacks a normal day and night cycle. Because of the planet's locked orbit, the world has only a small sliver of land that's considered habitable, while the remainder of the planet is broken into the frigid black of Darkside or the glassed deserts of Fullbright. A contingent of winged humanoids originating from lost Golarion, strix, maintain a permanent presence in Fullbright as one of the few settled regions under the scorching sun. While smaller groups eke out a living in the frozen void of Darkside, the region's most notable inhabitants are the feral creatures known as bloodbrothers, resembling a mix between a millipede and a muscular humanoid, that grotesquely prey on creatures by using them as auxiliary hearts.

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The resident verthanis are both the world's native inhabitants and its largest population. The species are on average eight-foot tall humanoids with large, protruding black eyes and skin that changes complexion to emit complex patterns. Verthanis also have an innate attraction to technology and augmentations; rarely does one find a verthani who hasn't received at least some augmentation in their lifetime, and many sport several as both a social display and a matter of preference. Along with these inhabitants, Verces also houses a large population of humans who emigrated before the Gap as well as clusters of kasathas and other species who settled in the deserts of Fullbright because the harsh climate was akin to their ancestral home world. A sizable contingent of shirrens reside on Verces, as the planet was the first to offer them sanctuary in their flight from the Swarm. Many still live in Darkside or Fullbright where their ancestors crash-landed while fleeing their pursuers. Today, the Shirren Colonies are some of the densest population centers on Verces.

Culturally, verthanis once organized their communities into a caste system, where individuals would choose at puberty to join one of three castes. The Augmented embraced magical and technological innovations and used them to enhance their physical forms. The God-Vessels became receptacles for divine energies, often becoming followers of one or more religious powers. Finally, the Pure Ones maintained physical purity and eschewed leaning too much into the path of the Augmented or God-Vessels, acting as intermediaries between the two castes. Though some traditional verthani family units and isolated communities maintain this practice, the choosing of castes has become more of a stylistic choice for younger generations, and even non-verthanis living on Verces have been admitted to desired castes, with the Augmented being a particularly appealing choice for many.



A coalition of 27 countries comprises Verces's central government, the Ring of Nations. Represented to the Pact by a democratically-elected Grand Assembly, the Ring of Nations originally formed the defense force known as the Stewards, which have since gone on to provide security and protection for the entirety of the Pact Worlds. The Ring of Nations is seen as an ideal government by many outsiders since Verces has not experienced any sort of civil warfare in countless millennia before the Gap. The Ring's outward stability deterred countless powers from ever challenging Verces, though in truth, many countries engage in hidden conflicts against one another that they painstakingly keep from public scrutiny to defend their world's appearance of total unity.

Fringe groups living outside the governance of the Grand Assembly struggle for survival along the terminal edge of Verces's ring zone and even into the Darkside and Fullbright regions. Known colloquially as the Outlaw Kingdoms, these lawless or isolationist groups push for recognition by authorities within the wider Pact Worlds while receiving little more than scorn from the Ring of Nations. A growing group of foreign interests has pushed to grant the Outlaw Kingdoms a spot on the Pact Council, seeking to create further division between the representatives of the Grand Assembly and possibly opening a crack in the typically indestructible exterior unity of Verces's leading planetary government. Such a move could allow outside influences to establish a greater hold on the world, and certain powers eagerly seek to use the desperate groups of the Outlaw Kingdoms for their own ends.

Some firebrands in the Outlaw Kingdoms loudly oppose unification with the Grand Assembly, believing the future lies in forming their own representative government outside the influence of city-dwellers and foreign powers.

RECENT EVENTS

The long era of peace and quiet economic growth continues on Verces. While there's little sign of the Grand Assembly undergoing any major shakeups, a relatively recent threat spreads across Verces: the rise of so-called "techno-terrorism," or destructive events orchestrated by various factions using technology. Groups of techno-terrorists strike out against the Grand Assembly and foreign powers using new asynchronous methods. One such group, the Remakers, have begun abducting citizens and forcibly upgrading them with unwanted augmentations. These actions began by targeting those who sided with the God-Vessels and Pure Ones castes and were believed to have been enacted by radical fringe elements of the Augmented. However, the recent influx of Veskarium refugees seeking to escape the mounting war with the Azlanti Star Empire have found themselves the targets of Remaker abductions. A mounting number of missing persons have people fearing these techno-terrorists might be building a veritable army of abductees for some sinister purpose. They might even have ties to the Mechanizers.

On Darkside, the rare ice element known as shelynium has long been harvested for its apparent healing properties. However, shortly before the birth of the Newborn, excavation teams reported that known deposits of shelynium were suddenly evaporating. The rampant disappearance of this substance across Darkside has led to sudden glacial shifts, which have in turn disrupted the ecologies of many native creatures. Broods of vicious bloodbrothers, once entombed in icy stasis, rampage across the Darkside with a ravenous appetite. Attacks caused a decrease in the ice mining necessary to support the luxe lifestyle enjoyed in the Ring of Nations. The Grand Assembly is already planning to send military forces to contain the situation—an action that could incite further conflict with the Outlaw Kingdoms on Darkside!



THE IDARI

The *Idari* is a massive, self-sustaining worldship orbiting the Pact Worlds' sun between Verces and the Diaspora. Originally built on the kasathan home world of Kasath to escape the planet's dying sun, the *Idari* arrived in the Pact Worlds in 240 AG. Finding their intended destination, the planet Akiton, already occupied, the inhabitants of the *Idari* chose to enter orbit and end their exodus aboard their ship, becoming a permanent fixture in the Pact Worlds. Today, the *Idari* is the center of kasathan culture and a thriving trade hub and political center.

THE IDARI

The Renewal
Gravity high (artificial); **Atmosphere** normal (artificial)
Day 27 hours (artificial); **Year** 4 years
Government representative council of aristocratic Doyens (The Doyenate)
Population kasathas, androids, ysoki, humans
Languages Akitonian, Common, Kasatha, Ysoki
Religions Ibra, Talavet, Weydan

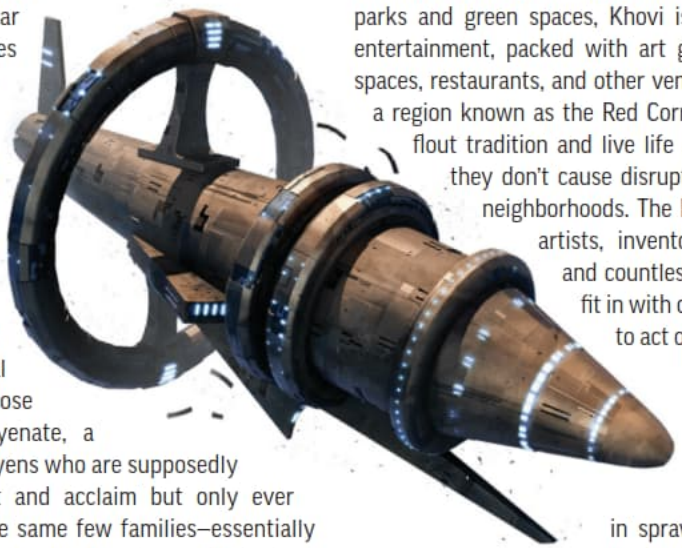
Built in the aftermath of the Gap, the *Idari* has been in operation for centuries without pause and has seen generations pass aboard it—and will most likely see a multitude more. To survive the journey, the *Idari* and its people followed ancient ancestral traditions and a sense of duty to their species as a collective, worked for the good of the community, and treated one another with respect. Life aboard the worldship was rigid and structured, and it remains so to this day.

Since arriving in the Pact Worlds, the *Idari* has opened its doors to its neighbors, allowing kasathas to travel the Pact Worlds as desired and outsiders to visit the great kasathan vessel. Deciphering the complex culture and traditions in place is a challenge for new visitors, requiring the use of local guides or a willing friend to interpret. While resident kasathas are always willing to share their culture with well-meaning visitors, the complexities and the social pressure to conform to a set of unwritten rules mean that most visitors stay only temporarily—merchants, tourists, students, and political

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delegates rarely choose to settle on the ship long-term. Yet, the *Idari* is always in need of engineers and environmental scientists, and people looking for employment in either field find their work much appreciated and well compensated. In fact, most of the non-kasathas aboard the *Idari* are androids and ysoki who emigrated from Akiton and Absalom Station to join the engineering or manufacturing crews and decided to settle on the worldship permanently.

The *Idari* is a world within a vast starship, with a hollow cylinder called the Drum that rotates around a central zero-gravity transport tube known as the Hub. This rotation provides artificial gravity to the Drum, while elevator spurs connect the Hub to the "ground" of the various sectors of the Drum, and airlocks at the Drum's ends provide access to docking bays and other access points. The Drum holds both urban centers and carefully maintained ecosystems. The *Idari*'s bridge and combat stations are located at the far fore of the vessel, while the engineering decks and manufacturing bays are within a sector called the Crucible, located near the ring of reaction engines that circles the *Idari*'s aft. As befitting a busy starship, the "day" is an artificial 27-hour period broken into three equally busy nine-hour shifts, all illuminated by eternally simulated daylight.



The *Idari*'s government is a complex ancestral democratic meritocracy whose highest office is the Doyenate, a council of leaders called doyens who are supposedly appointed based on merit and acclaim but only ever include the members of the same few families—essentially the kasathan aristocracy. Each doyen has their own responsibilities, and some also hold positions of power on the starship crew, such as captain or chief engineer. Most other citizens of the *Idari* are members of the crew or auxiliary crew, with only artists, entertainers, and merchants unaffiliated with the *Idari*'s infrastructure and government.

The inhabited portions of the *Idari*'s Drum are split into six sectors, each containing an urban center and its surrounding area. The Assembly of the Doyenate stands on its own to the south of the Lake of Memories and a solemn monument known as the Pillar of the Homeworld that magically eases homesickness.

Almolar contains densely populated domes packed with gardens and plant life, all surrounding the open-air Outland Markets and crisscrossed by several small rivers. The Outland Markets are frequented by visitors to the *Idari*, while Paradise Village is a relaxation destination popular with locals.

Brispex is the spiritual center of the *Idari*. It contains numerous temples and churches, primarily to Ibra and Talavet, and the Sholar Adat, a repository of ancestral knowledge that's regularly studied for new relevance. Most citizens of the *Idari* visit Brispex to attend New Kasath University upon completing their Tempering journey.

Gesilad is a massive garden sprawled across a hill, dotted by ceremonial and public spaces such as the Garden of All Kasath, which dutifully preserves plant species from Kasath; the Tempering Pool; and the Museum of Ancestral Technology. The living spaces in this sector are all underground, beneath the soil lining the Drum. South of Gesilad is the Pradulex Monastery, a temple that trains solarians through focusing on the Cycle, and Windcatcher Archives, base of operations for the Ecobalancers who maintain the *Idari*'s delicate ecosystems.

Heravex is a dry, hot region, similar in climate and appearance to Akiton and distant Kasath. Built atop a highland ridge, its residences are built to look like a traditional military installation. Multiple sites provide combat training to locals, including the Proving Pits and the Redoubt of Damoritosh.

Khovi is the most densely populated region of the *Idari*, with nearly half the worldship's population packed into its habitation towers. With little in the way of natural parks and green spaces, Khovi is a center of culture and entertainment, packed with art galleries, theaters, gaming spaces, restaurants, and other venues. Khovi is infamous for a region known as the Red Corridors, where communities flout tradition and live life as they desire—so long as they don't cause disruptions beyond their vibrant neighborhoods. The Red Corridors are home to artists, inventors, innovators, criminals, and countless people who simply don't fit in with cultural norms or who want to act out or test their boundaries.

Mesacand is an agricultural center featuring compact, hydroponic towers and high-tech vat-farming operations. Residents live in sprawling communal buildings and work closely with their neighbors. It also hosts the Culinarium, a research institute focusing on cooking techniques and health, that holds celebrated banquets every four months.

RECENT EVENTS

A deep rift has grown among the *Idari*'s people between those who wish to maintain the status quo, those who wish to fulfill the ship's original mandate to settle Akiton, and those who wish to embark on a new interstellar journey to distance themselves from the rising chaos of the Pact Worlds. Following the Newborn's birth and numerous other nearly catastrophic incidents in Pact Worlds space in recent years, support for leaving the Pact Worlds has increased within the Doyenate. Yet debate continues to rage, and tensions are rising among the populace. For the moment, the *Idari*'s engineers and other industrial crew are performing maintenance, repairs, and updates to prepare the *Idari* for a future journey. Doing so includes—most importantly—restoring function to the long-dormant, centuries-old engines.



THE DIASPORA

The Diaspora is a geographically diverse asteroid belt scattered over the vast space between the *Idari* worldship and the planet Eox. The Diaspora contains countless asteroids, starship wrecks, and space anomalies, and has little in the way of government or law enforcement. It's a haven for scavengers, explorers, miners, pirates, criminals in hiding, and unethical scientists. A golden stream of solar energy called the River Between runs through it in an endless loop, providing energy to crèche worlds and acting as a space highway for sarcesian travelers.

THE DIASPORA

The Lost Ones

Gravity varies; **Atmosphere** varies

Day varies; **Year** varies

Government legislature expanding around community forum (sarcesian legislature); elected council of pirate lords (The Pirate Council)

Capital Sejada (official), Broken Rock (pirates)

Population sarcesians, humans, dwarves, androids, ysoki

Languages Common, Dwarven, Sarcesian, Ysoki

Religions Besmara, the Devourer, Eloritu, Ibra, Lao Shu Po, the Newborn, Oras, Pharasma, Weydan

The Diaspora was formed during an ancient war, when the twin planets Damiar and Iovo were destroyed by the inhabitants of neighboring Eox. The fragments of these long-lost planets have mingled with the asteroids and planetary debris of the Diaspora. Ancient ruins, lost technology, derelict vessels, mystical sites, and damaged structures beckon discovery by explorers and salvagers. Due to this ancient catastrophe, the Diaspora is rife with supernatural phenomena that defy scientific categorization, including planar fissures, time loops, reality rifts, unpredictable storms of energized plasma and magical energy, hauntings, and countless other mysteries.

Sarcesians are the inheritors of the Diaspora—the descendants of the survivors of Damiar and Iovo, adapted to survive in the vacuum of space and fly across the void on butterfly-like wings that act as solar sails. Sarcesians are patient survivors who embrace individualism and the

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joys of exploration while maintaining connections to their communities and homes. They live in idyllic, bucolic crèche worlds, such as Sejada, and in underwater dome cities on the icy planetoid of Nisis, such as Ahilira, Merhja, and Vaando. These sites are sustained by arcane engines created by the first sarcesian survivors in the ancient past that produce atmosphere, gravity, and abundant biodiversity. These settlements, and countless other asteroids, are connected by the River Between, which the local sarcesians use as a highway that they can navigate at incredible speeds using their solar wings.

Sarcesians favor a "live and let live" approach to governance, allowing visitors to come and go throughout the Diaspora as they please, so long as they don't infringe upon the personal liberties of any sarcesians. This outlook has caused the Diaspora to become home to numerous other major factions, colonies, and outsiders looking to visit or lay down roots. Sarcesians' famously welcoming attitude doesn't extend to aggressors nor to Eoxian forces or corporations.

Another influential group is the Free Captains, a notorious collective of pirates and smugglers whose center of power is the hidden asteroid fortress of Broken Rock. Individual Free Captains operate throughout the Diaspora, each with their own fleet, leadership, hideaways, treasure caches, and flagships, but all Free Captains have agreed to abide by a code of conduct and owe allegiance to an elected council of pirate lords called the Pirate Council. There's currently an open spot on the Pirate Council, and dozens of ambitious pirates vie to earn the title of pirate lord and fill this power vacuum.

The emergence of predictable Drift lanes empowered pirates. As the prevalence of piracy increased, the Pact Council granted the Diaspora full Pact Worlds status, appointed the sarcesian community forum dominion over the region, and charged them with upholding the laws of the Pact—including combating piracy. Sejada now hosts the newly established legislature and a modest contingent of Stewards and Pact Worlds delegates. While most sarcesians remain content to ignore this turn of events entirely, leaving the Diaspora the way it's always been, the edict has inflamed the Free Captains, and crime is on the rise.

The most reliable port of call in the Diaspora is the *Farabarrium*, a salvaged ATech Immortal-class starship that's been repaired and repurposed into a trading hub and way station. In addition to starship docking, repairs, and modifications, the *Farabarrium* boasts a bustling salvage industry, regular food shipments, open markets, and a variety of entertainments, including restaurants, dance clubs, holovid dens, and gambling parlors. The masterminds behind the *Farabarrium* are the Shirsask Kaia, a clan of ysoki salvagers who live in hidden sectors of the starship off-limits to visitors.

Dwarven Star Citadels, space stations, and mining operations dot the otherwise inhospitable reaches of the Diaspora. The heart of this sprawling collective is Heorrhahd, the first Star Citadel built by dwarves and their allies shortly after the Gap. Containing a subterranean city, Heorrhahd is essentially a massive asteroid carved to look like a dwarven face, driven via massive starship thrusters. Heorrhahd persists simultaneously as a monument to dwarven history and culture, a safe haven, and a self-sustaining city-state with a well-armed space navy protecting it. Heorrhahd is governed by a council of animists called Rivethun, who treat with spirits for knowledge and power and who use that insight to guide their people into a new golden age without breaking from their past and traditions. Numerous mining companies also have their headquarters in Heorrhahd, including Bolka Mining Consortium and Stonequarry Industries. Elsewhere, Star Citadel Theodrane is managed by Ulrikka clan representatives and acts as the headquarters for Ulrikka Clanholdings.

Itinerant peoples from across the Pact Worlds inhabit the Diaspora in independent settlements, burgeoning colonies, hidden bunkers, corporate laboratories, isolated temples, forgotten starships, and countless other places. They include colonies like Refuge, which was founded to create an independent android home world; religious sects like the House of the Void, the Disciples of the Sixth Rune, the cult of the Devourer, and new temples dedicated to the Newborn; research stations like Archon's Halo and Center C; military sites like the Veskarium's Jioh Station; and even entertainment venues like the flashy Songbird Station, which is a combination performing arts center and temple school dedicated to Shelyn, goddess of art, beauty, and music, with a new wing celebrating her amalgamate form Zon-Shelyn. Songbird Station's concert hall hosts famous entertainers from across the galaxy, including Strawberry Machine Cake and Abysshead, singers Lita Starr and K1ng ChOrd, and even circus troupes like the Eternal Revelers.

RECENT EVENTS

Orocorans and others displaced by the destruction of Aucturn have resettled in the Diaspora, congregating around ancient ruins, derelict starships, and sites of mystical power. A dwarven explorer named Vraine claims to have ascended to godhood after discovering the fabled Ascendant Shard—rumored to be a lost fragment of the *Starstone*. Vraine's current whereabouts are unknown, but their followers build monuments, shrines, and temples in their name.

Meanwhile, sarcesian civilization is under assault. Tensions rise between the Free Captains and the sarcesian legislature as the first of the legislature's "enforcement patrols" join the Stewards in their efforts to crack down on piracy. On Sejada, local sarcesians find the encroachment of Pact Worlds delegates and the Stewards a growing blight on their crèche world. The dome city of Vaando faces attacks from aquatic predators. Taking advantage of these events, the Corpse Fleet has slipped several of their starships into the region, a move sure to pose a threat to all of the Diaspora's residents.



Once a green world ruled by elebrians, Eox is now a deadly wasteland inhabited by undead. Hubristic elebrian leaders sought to conquer their planetary neighbors, launching a terrible attack against the worlds Damiar and Iovo. The Eoxian assault shattered both targets and annihilated their populations, at the cost of burning their own world with magical flame. The survivors embraced necromancy to rebuild Eox, becoming the first bone sages and reviving their beloved dead into an eternity of undeath. Bone sages rule scattered fiefdoms on Eox's irradiated surface, and hordes of mindless undead wander the twisted wastelands outside magical bunkers and walled necropolises.

EOX

The Dead
Gravity normal; **Atmosphere** toxic and thin
Day 30 days; **Year** 5 years
Government Council of bone sages
Capital Orphys
Population undead (all varieties), elebrians
Languages Eoxian, Necril
Religions Pharasma, Urgathoa

The formerly lush and verdant world of Eox long ago lost its atmosphere and became a desolate rock floating amid the worlds of the Pact Worlds System. Its inhabitants, intellectual but egotistical elebrians, engineered their own downfall and were eventually forced to survive in one of the most horrifying choices ever made by a species.

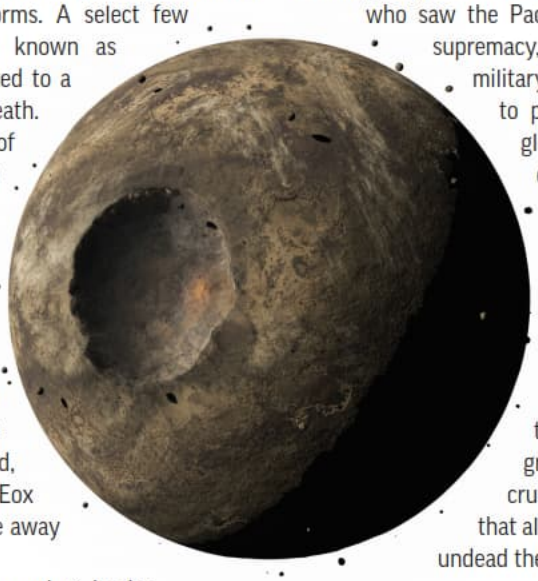
Fierce conflict with the now-destroyed and forgotten worlds of Damiar and Iovo eventually led to Eox's elebrian planetary rulers unleashing a terrifying weapon that seemingly backfired and ignited their own home world's atmosphere. Though the elebrians effectively "won" their conflict with the twin worlds and their sarcesian inhabitants, it also created the vast Diaspora and forced the elebrians to choose undeath over extinction.

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The elite became undead and revived everyone else. The world of Eox is now a wasteland inhabited by walking corpses. Most of the planet's cursed badlands aren't inhabitable for the living or appealing to intelligent undead outside of the vast sepulchral cities where elite bone sages rule over decadent, perverse societies that value life only for its entertainment value—if they value living creatures as more than a potential food source at all.

These ancient historical events have defined modern Eox, and many within the Pact Worlds still view Eoxians with suspicion and hold concerns about how far the bone sages would go in future conflicts to preserve themselves over the Pact. To this day, most living visitors stick to sanitized, safe tourist spots like Pact Port. Ambitious and reckless professionals might venture into the perilous but prestigious Halls of the Living to earn fame and fortune with Zo! Media productions, but most don't last on Eox outside these sanctuaries. Eox's permanent population is estimated to be around 96% undead.

Eox's undead are numerous and diverse. The conversion of the population took many forms. A select few elites became powerful undead known as necrovites, but most were relegated to a form of basic preservative undeath. They became corpsefolk. Tens of thousands of menial skeletons and zombies perform basic labor across the planet or are left to their own devices in ancient catacombs and long-abandoned tomb complexes. More esoteric or powerful unliving beings (like vampires or wraiths) aren't as common among the necrohierarchy of the grave world, but many make a pilgrimage to Eox to live a relatively stable existence away from persecution.



While thought to be effectively extinct in the modern era, the elebrian species secretly survives. Some dwell across the Pact Worlds, but the largest population resides on Eox. Most surviving elebrians endure within the Halls of the Living, a location where living beings are put on display for interested undead. An influential bone sage by the name of Zo! manages many of the operations within the Halls of the Living and owns rights to countless syndicated dramas involving living elebrians–with the oldest undead knowing that Zo! owes his immense fortune in part to his ownership of a lucrative media megacorp and originally achieved notoriety due to recording the aftermath of the Gap.

Living beings visiting Eox quickly discover that the world has only the barest amenities in mind for them. While some settlements maintain atmospheric generators that allow for normal breathing, most living creatures must use environmental protections to ensure they can breathe in the toxic atmosphere that permeates the world. Luckily, Eox's status as a Pact signatory means that living creatures are generally afforded the same rights as local undead, though travel is restricted from dangerous areas where the governing bone sages can't guarantee travelers' health and safety.

Outsiders view Eox with suspicion fueled by several religious institutions, the greatest of which is Pharasma's holy church. The Lady of Graves opposes the creation and longevity of undead, and many of her most radical adherents believe that Eox is anathematic to their goddess. Vindicating undead slayers stalk the hidden places of Eox's settlements, many of whom even employ potent magic and technology to appear as undead while they dispense their self-appointed task against people they perceive to be blasphemies. Eoxians fear or hate them as serial killers but some outsiders paint these vigilantes as heroes.

Recent history has only inflamed opinions against the bone sages and undead when Eox attempted to wrest control of Absalom Station in the famed Magefire Assault.

The Corpse Fleet is perhaps the greatest blemish against Eoxian interests because of its endurance and prevalence in the galaxy. Formed from undead military commanders who saw the Pact as a challenge to their natural supremacy, the Corpse Fleet is a coordinated military force that disappeared in the Vast to prepare for an eventual return to glory. Today, the Eoxian bone sages officially decry the Corpse Fleet's actions, but intelligence gathering agencies believe at least a handful of Eoxian leaders still provide covert intelligence and resources to Corpse Fleet commanders. In a strange way, the presence of such an aggressive undead coalition has taken some pressure off Eox, giving groups like Pharasma's church or the crusading Knights of Golarion a foe that almost comically matches the type of undead they seek to battle against.

RECENT EVENTS

Within the immense vaults of the Veiled Tomb, under the ruined city of Murthal, an undead being of primordial power rests undreaming. Defeated in a forgotten time by living elebrian heroes, the horror called the Insatiable Eclipse woke with the cries of the Newborn. The necromantic titan's first twitches commanded almost all undead within 1,000 miles of its tomb to witness its reawakening. As word spreads of this being's seemingly unimaginable power, bone sages are desperately reacting to control the situation and slow panic.

In the destabilized environment within the Pact following the Newborn's birth, few have noticed an increase in Corpse Fleet patrols around the Diaspora. A few concerned bone sages have begun actively reaching out to adventurers to counter these incursions. While he's yet to directly get involved against the Corpse Fleet, the multimedia mogul Zo! keeps a keen eye (not to mention several hundred camera drones) on the situation in the Diaspora and the Vast where Corpse Fleet sightings are most numerous.



TRIAXUS

Triaxus is a wandering world shaped by blazing summers and icy winters that last for generations. This world of boundless magic was the birthplace of dragonkin: hybrid draconic beings created as living symbols of the bonds between dragons and ryphorians.

TRIAXUS

The Wanderer
Gravity normal; **Atmosphere** normal
Day 24 hours; **Year** 317 years
Government Council of city-states and dragon advisors
Capitals City McCityface, Ning
Population dragons, dragonkin, ryphorians
Languages Draconic, Ryphorian
Religions Dagosarn, Ibra, Newborn

Triaxus, named the Wanderer for its unusual orbit, boasts abundant natural and magical resources. As the planet followed a meandering path around the sun, seasons lasted for centuries in an epic cycle that shaped everything from terrain to weather to the world's peoples. Then, Aucturn's explosion catapulted Triaxus from the most distant point in its orbit toward the sun, melting winter snows and suddenly shifting the world into blazing summer. No one knows if Triaxus will return to wandering or remain stuck forever in a new status quo.

Ecosystems shift drastically between summer and winter. Most Triaxian creatures evolved to thrive in one season and hibernate through the other, while a few species undergo gradual changes at a genetic level that allow them to weather the seasonal cycle. Dragons and ryphorians—humanoids with smooth bronze skin or thick pale fur determined by their season of birth—evolved together on Triaxus, where they learned to endure the seasons and built permanent communities.

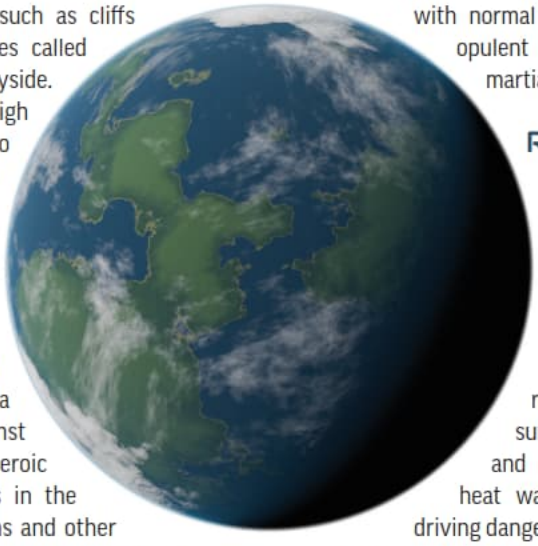
Dragons and ryphorians once lived and worked together everywhere on Triaxus, but today, few true dragons intermix with shorter-lived species. Most dragons have retreated to the Drakelands, where they watch over nature preserves created to nurture endangered species or manage powerful corporate enterprises, command fearsome armies, or lord over estates perfectly tailored to their whimsy.

Ryphorian interests hold sway in the Allied Territories and the Immortal Suzerainty of Ning. These city-states rarely

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cooperate but do elect representatives to serve as part of a planetary senate that advocates for the entire world on the Pact Council. Planetary laws are lax and rarely enforced, but each city-state has its own legal codes. The Skyfire Legion is a planetary defense militia overwatching the interconnected lands of the Allied Territories and the Skyfire Mandate from lofty aeries. Aylok, Hinth, Qua, Meruchia, Nuvosa, Ning, Preita, and Weldfall are considered the Allied Territories of Triaxus, but Aylok and Ning have historically isolated themselves from their neighbors in most matters, only occasionally joining forces for mutual defense. The territories operate independently, but dragon advisors frequently sit among the Pact delegates, hoping to guide their younger neighbors while representing the desires of their compatriots in the Drakelands.

The dragons and humanoids of Triaxus share a long history of harmony and strife, intermixing in love and war, building and razing communities, and protecting Triaxus from distant threats hand-in-claw. Draconic influence is everywhere on Triaxus, from art to cuisine. Settlements tend to be built around or below lofty perches, such as cliffs or mountaintops, where fortresses called aeries keep watch over the countryside. Many public buildings have high ceilings and spacious hearths to accommodate dragonkin family and neighbors or, more rarely, dragon guests.



Not everyone on Triaxus enjoys the presence of dragons. Some conspiracy theorists remember a time when dragon tyrants ruled the planet and recall a fabled history of wars waged against cruel dragon overlords by the heroic Skyfire Legion, who built aeries in the Skyfire Mandate where ryphorians and other humanoids could live free from draconic law. Most laugh at their claims, but in a galaxy full of witchwarpers, their theory might not be completely without truth.

Aylok is a walled city between the haunted Hoziah Forest and the fertile plains that supply most of the region with crops and livestock. Incursions of feral ice beasts and grave shadows plague the otherwise peaceful farms of the valley north of the city. Turmoil in the region and a string of sudden deaths have destabilized the isolationist regime in charge of Aylok, and rumors from inside the walls claim its citizens are ready to revolt.

Formerly called Zo until a legal dispute forced a publicly sourced name change, City McCityface is famous for their luxurious spaceport and elite pilot academy. The city is also rumored to be a den of spies. The Port of a Thousand Ships, often simply called the Port by people in a hurry, is the star of a media campaign designed to boost its galactic reputation and attract tourists. Amusement parks, shopping centers, and hotels are springing up everywhere around the Port.

Kamora is a sprawling citadel looming over the southern edge of the Uchorae Jungle. Menaced by Creeva's horde of vampiric beasts, Kamora's population trains to defend their homes and families from the fungal monsters, vampires, and wild animals that emerge from the jungle to threaten them. This training begins in late childhood and continues until their twilight years, when most Kamorans finally retire from duty.

Preita is a highly industrialized province known for its many renowned institutions of learning and scientific research, plus a hub for hundreds of Pact Worlds corporations looking to hire studious graduates from Preita's academies. A combination of magical and technological infrastructure keeps Preita's cities relatively stable during seasonal changes, but even some of these sophisticated systems have been stretched past their breaking point after the recent destruction of Aucturn and the psychic fallout from that incident.

The Immortal Suzerainty of Ning is an island nation ruled by oligarchs who are believed to be personifications of the land and thus are always treated with reverence approaching worship, even though most suzerains have been mortals with normal lifespans. Ning is known for its opulent city vistas, pristine beaches, and martial artists known as battleflowers.

RECENT EVENTS

Modern Triaxians find themselves living in times foretold in antiquity. Prehistoric Triaxian legends predicted the Final Winter—a dire season that would herald a new era of change and strife. The hatching of Aucturn rocketed Triaxus back toward the sun, effectively resetting its orbit and disrupting winter with a sudden heat wave. Sweltering temperatures are driving dangerous wildlife out of hibernation and threatening winter-acclimated species with extinction. Floods from rapid thawing sweep through coastal villages while uncontrollable forest fires blaze across the world's deep forests. Primal magic is going haywire, and elementals pour through unstable gateways from the Plane of Fire.

Far above the ravaged landscape, a strange new moon hangs in the sky—a chunk of *aucturnite* named Aucturna by the terrified Triaxians who witnessed it hurtling toward their planet before some unseen magical barrier halted it. Aucturna's light is considered blessed by Newbornites on Triaxus, many of whom have immigrated to the world just for the opportunity to gaze upon the *aucturnite* moon, which they believe is a holy relic protected by Midwife Xemenea.

Once a tranquil expanse of warm ocean (or a pristine shelf of sturdy ice in winter), the Sephorian Sea has transformed into a treacherous abyss of vicious sea creatures, living maelstroms, and unpredictable tides. As flooding and sudden tsunamis overwhelm many coastal villages, residents turn to piracy or scavenging the waterlogged ruins of their former homes for supplies and valuables.



LIAVARA

Shimmering rings encircle this peach-colored gas giant, formed by countless shepherd moons gathering in mighty Liavara's orbit. Layers of gases enfold Liavara's core. Tranquil gas jungles float past spherical arcologies created to explore and study this bizarre and beautiful planet. Some of the moons clustered around Liavara appear no larger than a house, while others are the size of a dwarf planet. Only the cryptic Dreamers and the aloof hallajin seers know Liavara's secrets, and they aren't telling.

LIAVARA

The Dreamer
Gravity high; **Atmosphere** unbreathable
Day 72 hours; **Year** 12 years
Government Protectorate managed by Confluence
Capitals Curiosity, Forever Halls, Orasolas, Roselight, Telataranas
Population barathus, dirindis, haans, sazarons, shirrens, troxes, bantrids
Languages Brethedan
Religions Green Faith, Newborn, Oras

The massive gas giant known as Liavara is controlled by Confluence, a governing barathu conglomerate from the nearby planet Bretheda. Confluence strives to protect Liavara's delicate and unique ecosystems from outside contamination while sustainably managing the world's valuable gas mining resources. Many barathu corporations have established outposts on Liavara, but it's difficult for outsiders to gain a foothold on the world without a healthy dose of bribery or an insider connection. One of the few organizations who have succeeded in gaining routine access to Liavara is the Starfinder Society, which operates out of the Dreamer Lodge on the Roselight arcology. The Rose Garden is a haven for Xenowardens and their allies, who have won enough support among the city's movers and shakers to freely operate and find lucrative sponsorship deals wherever they turn.

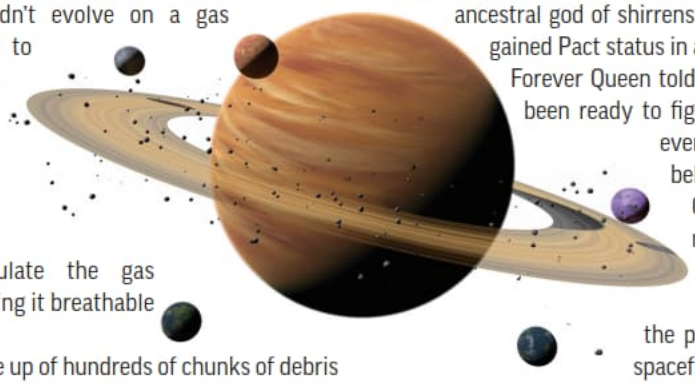
Most visitors are corralled on Upwell, an industrial satellite or false moon where offworld interests compete for control of a booming market. Tethered to Roselight, Upwell is a commerce hub and busy spaceport. Opulence and trash overflow its crowded corridors, and the lucrative gas mining industry funds crime and industry.

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Upwell's surface sister city, Roselight, is a paradise of exquisite architecture that mingles seamlessly with pristine natural landscapes. It's governed by wise, peaceful leaders looking out for everyone's best interests. The streets are free of litter, and buildings are beautifully sculpted to mimic the natural curves of the vibrant wildlife floating outside the arcology walls. People are friendly and courteous. Abundance and culture are everywhere. Yet beneath the utopian surface, corruption runs rampant—bribe-hungry officials and lax inspectors are always willing to look away for a price.

Wildlife on Liavara is truly spectacular. Hunting is completely forbidden—poaching being one of the few crimes punished severely by Confluence—and tourism is strictly limited to prevent overcrowding and damage. Researchers must obtain special licenses to work on Liavara, which involve learning about the local flora and fauna. Kejis, cloud-skates, tarenakes, and other native creatures comprise a complex ecosystem barathu scientists are still working to understand. Omas are plentiful, with many species that have already gone extinct on Bretheda cavorting in Liavara's atmospheric layers.

Native life-forms coexist along with transplants, such as haans and Dreamers, who originated on nearby Bretheda but thrive in Liavara's wilder yet calmer environment. Most creatures that didn't evolve on a gas giant lack the anatomy to breathe Liavara's air without environmental protections, but many of the world's major cities like Roselight are surrounded by envirodomes that regulate the gas content of the air, rendering it breathable for most other creatures.



Liavara's rings are made up of hundreds of chunks of debris including asteroids with eldritch carvings, fossilized remains of impossible entities, and moons capable of sustaining life. Many of Liavara's dozens of shepherd moons are deserted, but a handful teem with diverse life-forms, lush vegetation, and ancient history.

Osoro and Arkanen are Pact members. Osoro is a wild moon infamous for poison jungles and vicious biota. Each year, the city of Orasolas recruits hunters to help control the deadly irokiroi population. Otherwise, Osorans live on homesteads in the moon's brutal wilderness, work in research depots, or live in temporary camps. A handful of barathu and trox families hold claims to lands on Osoro dating back before the Gap.

The moon Arkanen has a long history centering around the capital Telataranas, but the various districts within its featureless urban sprawl each make their own laws and have distinct cultures with nuanced differences in cuisine and fashion. Their shared territories and speedy infospheres, however, mean ideas spread quickly across Arkanen.

Some aliens' anatomy differs so extensively that other creatures struggle to process them at first, such as hallajins living on Hallas. Hallajins have energy bodies and communicate solely through telepathy. They've learned through trial and error that most other creatures need time to prepare before encountering them and have designed an intense, month-long curriculum to accustom non-hallajins to perceiving them before allowing outsiders into their spaces.

Blockaded until the Newborn's psychic cry disrupted its magical wards, Hallas is open to visitors for the first time in living memory. Hallajins who live there are selective about who they allow to explore their home world and learn their secrets. Visitors are greeted in Curiosity, a graceful levitating city of diamond skyscrapers recently built for guests. Inside its labyrinthine pleasure structures are a series of integrated tests designed to assess the traits of every prospective visitor, helping hallajins determine which outsiders might be suited to life on Hallas by observing their behavior in hypothetical situations or by psychically interrogating them. Everything outside Curiosity remains a mystery to all but a chosen few.

The moon Nchak has a rugged surface with painted mountains and dolorous plains lined with silvery solar farms. Below the surface lie the Forever Halls, where most of Nchak's residents dwell in concordance with the Forever Queen, the moon's absolute ruler and the living incarnation of Hylax, ancestral god of shirrens and troxes. Nchak recently gained Pact status in a quiet ceremony, but as the Forever Queen told her people, they've always been ready to fight for their dear neighbors even without the formality of belonging to the alliance.

Once believed to be a natural moon, Hibb was recently revealed to be a worldship created by the prehistoric Sivv Dominion, a spacefaring society of conquerors and oppressors who used bantrids as servitors. Bantrids took control of the ship and drifted into the Pact System over time, eventually emerging from their underground "bunkers" (the ship's stasis chambers) to explore the surface and integrate into the wider Pact Worlds.

RECENT EVENTS

The Dreamers' rude awakening affected Liavara more than most locations in the Pact Worlds. Nearby trade lanes experience constant disruptions by so-called drifters who get in the way of shipments and cause costly accidents. Major bioengineering corporations of the Pact Worlds have kicked off a race to inoculate the remaining Dreamer population against whatever is driving them away from peacefully wandering the planet.

Hallas has opened and quarantines visitors in Curiosity, a floating observatory in the moon's atmosphere where hallajins prepare explorers for the profoundly unsettling experience of visiting the surface and witnessing the moon's bizarre extraplanar wildlife. Only a few outsiders have explored Hallas, and so far all refuse to speak of their experiences to people who aren't initiated and prepared for the knowledge.



BRETHEDA

Cosmopolitan Bretheda is massive enough to form its own miniature system. The tumultuous gas giant ruled by Confluence, the name for a superorganism formed from linked barathu consciousnesses, is circled by dozens of moons with their own sovereign societies, including: Dykon, a crystalline haven of knowledge inhabited by inquisitive urogs; Kalo-Mahoi, a world of warm seas that's become a bastion of art and culture thanks to the achievements of its native kalos; and Marata, a utopian forest moon where maraquoi colonies thrive.

BRETHEDA

The Cradle
Gravity high; **Atmosphere** unbreathable
Day 144 hours; **Year** 30 years
Government Democratic federation
Capitals Ekynas, Grand Inza, Ha Quoia, Trillidiem
Population barathus, maraquois, kalos, urogs
Languages Brethedan
Religions Abadar, Ibra, Lambatuin, Oras, Triune, Weydan, Zon-Shelyn

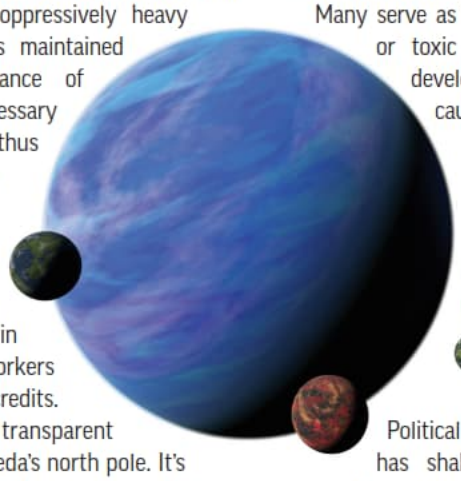
Confluence once governed Bretheda, including protectorates created to safeguard the interests and rights of populations living on many of the gas giant's moons. At that time, only Kalo-Mahoi had gained full Pact status and had its own voice on the Pact Council. For generations, commerce and laws were decided by Confluence, who prioritized barathu interests on Bretheda and neighboring Liavara (another designated protectorate controlled by Confluence) over the so-called fringe interests of people living on the nearby moons Dykon and Marata.

Everything changed in 323 AG when Dykon and Marata gained full Pact status. Most people in the Pact Worlds System consider the entrance of Bretheda's second and third most populous moons into the formal alliance a positive development, but some barathu conglomerates fear losing control of the region entirely and greedily cling to their waning political power.

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Dykon and Marata have both formally elected representatives to join the Pact Council, and now the triple bloc they form with Kalo-Mahoi is known as the Lunar Trio on social media, with the representatives' fashion choices often idolized and represented in popular media as magical heroines or sophisticated divas. **Huur-Luru** (impatient female kalo envoy), **Aoqeri** (boisterous genderfluid maraquoi witchwarper), and **Trenta** (curious and friendly agender urog technomancer) tirelessly advocate for lunar rights, amplify other historically marginalized voices on the Pact Council, and support popular interest issues like workers' rights, environmental protections, and civil liberties. The Trio are most popular for their hard stances against corporate lobbyists—sometimes even to their own detriment.

Bretheda's atmosphere isn't breathable for most creatures who didn't evolve there; however, barathus, omas, and other natives have little trouble adapting to the air of most other worlds. Brethedan cities are enclosed within protective magitech domes designed to guarantee the comfort and safety of all life-forms visiting for business or pleasure. Business hubs and corporate facilities are all located in the upper atmosphere; the gas giant's lower layers are particularly volatile and prone to dangerous storms with oppressively heavy gravity. Brethedan infrastructure is maintained by barathus under the governance of Confluence, though few laws are necessary to encourage flexible, tranquil barathus to collaborate and empathize with one another. Many Pact World corporations operate under Confluence's oversight, and many criminals and opportunists skirt the lax laws to make a profit, resulting in a thriving gray market with gig workers willing to do just about anything for credits.



Trillidiem is a floating arcology of transparent aluminum domes anchored to Bretheda's north pole. It's a hub for biotech, gas mining, and chemical manufacture. Meanwhile, pirates stalk the short-haul trade lanes winding between the two gas giants and their myriad moons, winnowing merchant vessels and freighters foolish enough to enter hostile space unprepared.

Countless floating creatures inhabit Bretheda's swells and storms, mostly contained below Boundary, where they thrive in preserves sustained by wealthy tourists at luxury resorts. Rarer with each passing year, omas sing a strange song akin to the neighboring Liavaran Dreamers' cosmic melody. Some believe omas are intelligent, and the space whales' mysterious nature attracts millions of tourists every year.

Dykon is a crystalline moon of silicate life-forms known as urogs. Urogs have an alien mindset, and their lack of conventional manners baffles many Pact Worlders, but their unique insights and unflinching pragmatism makes them excellent problem solvers. Ekynas is the primary hub of knowledge on Dykon, less a capital city and more a network of institutions built up around a massive spaceport made of crystal arranged into mind-bending fractal architecture designed by acclaimed urog engineers.

Deep in the oceans of Kalo-Mahoi, Grand Inza is a neon paradise of opulent architecture and artistic flair. It's a cultural beacon and a playground for famous artists and fashionable celebrities. Below a frozen crust, Kalo-Mahoi's warm seas are superheated by geothermal vents. Arcologies cradle glittering cities built by native kalos and guarded by sophisticated militaries. Deep in the kelp forests, unstable arcane portals open into the First World, called blooms, creating dangerous gateways exploited by linnorms and other monsters bent on conquering worlds that don't belong to them.

The peaceful communities of builders, farmers, and makers on Marata have no laws and no rulers. The forest moon's permanent population is mostly maraquois with a mix of other Pact Worlds species who have immigrated here due to philosophical alignment or to master a craft. Some Maratan communities enjoy a simple hunter-harvester life based on the seasons, while others work together to solve larger problems, such as bringing peace to the galaxy, curing diseases, extending life, perfecting a crafting technique, or exploring distant worlds outside the known galaxy.

Most of Bretheda's other moons are sparsely populated. Many serve as corporate mining sites, nature preserves, or toxic dumping grounds, while a few have developed instead into nefarious locales that cause death and economic loss every year. The most infamous death moons are Thyst, a radioactive rock with a poisonous atmosphere infamously home to an abandoned Corpse Fleet site, and Ruarde, the so-called Demon Moon whose name is a curse—or so they say on the infosphere.

RECENT EVENTS

Political upheaval and a resurgence in piracy has shaken up Bretheda's previously tranquil system. Transports and freighters travel armed to the teeth or accompanied by elite bodyguards. Corporations are always looking to hire muscle. Corps and crime outfits squabble over petty claims, and rumors of supernatural occurrences since the eruption of Aucturn have spooked many business concerns into withdrawing their claims or canceling major expansions in Trillidiem. Others seize new opportunities.

The rumored appearance of the Demon Moon has shaken up fringe communities. News of the feared curse has spread quickly among long-haul freighter crews and isolated scientific research communities, who are said to be some of the first victims of a curse creeping across the moons of Bretheda.

Omas have been attacking trade vessels. Some say they're in league with pirates or former Skyfire Legionnaires from neighboring Triaxus seeking easy plunder. A Veskarium crew, led by Captain Juluzak of *Honorbound*, tangled with the mysterious attackers; they reported their assailants were efficient but honorable fighters who deployed small, sleek fighter craft in coordinated squad maneuvers alongside war-trained omas and occasionally even dragons and, once, a pair of sarcesians with radiant solar wings unfurled.



APOSTAE

Apostae is a hollow planetoid that lacks an atmosphere and boasts few resources. However, mysterious gateways on its rocky surface provide access to a network of tunnels, magitech chambers, and caverns inside its core. The world itself is an immense complex, or worldship, sent to the Pact System for some unknown purpose in ages past. Azrinaran elves escaped Lost Golarion through a portal that brought them to Apostae. Their descendants established wealthy dynasties that control Apostae's industry to this day, specializing in magitech, weapons, and illicit commerce.

APOSTAE

The Messenger

Gravity low or normal (interior); **Atmosphere** none or normal (interior)

Day 7 days; **Year** 243 years

Government Assembly of azrinaran corporations

Capital Nightarch

Population elves (azrinarans), astrazoans, orcs, kobolds, xulgaths

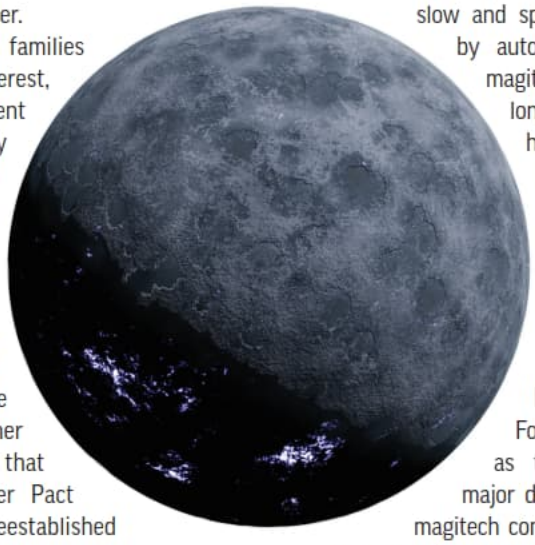
Languages Elven, Orcish

Religions Eloritu, Ibra, Zon-Shelyn

At first scan, the distant planetoid of Apostae appears to be nothing more than a desolate tiny orb floating at the outer reaches of the Pact System, but the truth is far more insidious. The world of Apostae is a planet only in the loosest of definitions—it is, in fact, a vast interstellar vessel that entered the star system in an age long ago and has since waited near the system's edge for some enigmatic reason. Encased in stellar material collected over its untold millennia of travel, modern Apostae is now known as being a distant hub, for it's home to a powerful society of azrinaran elves and their familial corporations.

Sometime during the Gap, the elves who would eventually become known as azrinarans found themselves transported to Apostae. Though the exact reason was lost to that moment of addled history, most descendants of those arrivals maintain solid evidence that they were refugees seeking to flee Golarion

using the *aiudara* network and return to Castrovel, their ancestral home world. However, the elves of Sovyrian cut off access to their magical transportation hub during the tumult, and the refugees found themselves disoriented and emerging inside the vast worldship of Apostae. By the time the Gap had ended, the self-proclaimed azrinarans had established magitech outposts on Apostae's surface. Though they knew little of their people's original history, they believe with utter certainty that the elves of Sovyrian purposefully cut them off. They formed a new society by employing some of the alien technology they discovered within the worldship as well as the unique magitech gateways abandoned across the planet's interior and surface. The largest of these gateways, the Nightarch, became the primary seat of azrinaran civilization. The planet's largest city and primary seat of corporate power is named Nightarch after this landmark. The ruling Zeizerer family tightly controls access to Nightarch and the remaining relics and unexplored chambers inside the planet, funneling more money into their familial accounts through the powerful Zeizerer Munitions corporation, a notorious Pact Worlds–based arms manufacturer and dealer.



What were once noble elven families quickly shifted their areas of interest, each specializing in different industries that would be necessary to survive in their harsh new environment. Not everyone made it. Some turned to alien powers for aid, particularly the generous tempters of the Outer Rifts. Ambitious families quickly embraced corporate endeavors that would benefit their lineage (usually while exploiting another group). Most focused on goods that could be exported to the wider Pact System after contact was reestablished following the Gap.

Azrinaran corporations are family-operated businesses like Arabani Arms Ltd., Zeizerer Munitions, and Xicton Weapons Consolidated. Azrinaran paranoia and pride have ensured that most corporations are heavily defined by their founding families through vast social webs and constant application of nepotism in hiring and evaluation practices. In theory, anyone can apply, but family comes first in hiring and promotion.

Azrinaran corporations publicly downplay allegiances with fiendish forces from the Outer Rifts, but it's an open secret in most circles. Almost every corporation has at least one tenuous agreement with a demon of some standing, whether it be for additional muscle or connections in the wider cosmos allowing for the acquisition of important goods or information. Such business is routine to Apostae's corporations, though it isn't entirely unheard of for a familial complex to suddenly explode in unholy flame or find itself besieged by a host of demons.

Many orcs and other rare ancestries from Golarion eke out an existence on Apostae through tough labor and as corporate muscle. Outsiders often incorrectly assume these orcs are trapped in a type of indentured servitude, but in fact many orcs believe the harsh Apostaean landscape will harden their resolve and prepare them for an eventual ascension to the great battlefield of Lost Golarion, where they'll stand alongside their kin who disappeared during the Gap. Hosts of kobolds and xulgaths also train on Apostae. Some grudgingly accept mercenary work for azrinaran corps, keeping the mistrusted oligarchs at a distance when they're not cashing in on the latest job.

Perhaps most mysterious of Apostae's inhabitants are the shape-changing astrazoans. With a history lost to the Gap, most researchers (and astrazoans themselves) believe they're related to whatever mystery exists within the vast worldship interior of Apostae. Most eventually leave to explore the stars, while a handful remain behind to search their supposed homeland for clues that might solve the mystery of their ancestral identity.

A few immense blocked doors open into the world's largely unexplored interior, with scattered smaller access points only admitting explorers into cordoned off sections of the wider ship. Exploration into the planet has met with slow and sporadic progress, mostly contested by automated security systems, strange magitech constructs, and the spirits of long-deceased aliens. These expeditions have made little headway, since each passage opened seems to connect to little more than a sliver of the greater interior, which itself seems to possess an intelligence meant to confound those attempting to map it.

RECENT EVENTS

Following the galactic event known as the Drift Crisis, several of the major doorways opened to admit hosts of magitech constructs that launched a brief siege on azrinaran holdings before being fought off by a coalition of the planet's inhabitants and summoned demonic allies. These events have forced a sudden reevaluation of the threat posed from within Apostae. Once secure in their absolute control of their planet, azrinaran corporations are struggling to make compromises and temporary deals to protect their homes. Such efforts have seen mixed success, while missives to the Starfinder Society and other organizations have brought fresh groups to explore Apostae's recently exposed interior.

The strange anomalies occurring across the planet pose another concern to Apostae's people. Often temporal in nature, each anomaly seems to stutter time backward or forward for minutes or hours before suddenly snapping back into place. Exactly what and who are affected varies, but these events clearly emanate from the central point of Nightarch, Apostae's largest settlement. The truth behind these unusual events connects to a strange golden artifact owned by Exeduchess Chaunteil Zeizerer, the current CEO of Zeizerer Munitions and matron of the Zeizerer family, who keeps it contained in her corporate museum.

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PULONIS

A dangerous and beautiful planet of titanic jungles, dangerous beasts, and wild magnetic storms, Pulonis is the home world of pahtras and the most recent planet to join the Pact Worlds alliance, even though it's located far away in the otherwise Veskarium-dominated Ghavaniska System.

PULONIS

The Rebel
Gravity low; **Atmosphere** normal
Day 54 hours; **Year** 20 years
Government Democratic federation
Capital Starlance
Population ijtikris, pahtras, talphis, vesk, skittermanders, hymothoas
Languages Ijtikri, Pahtra, Talphi, Vesk
Religions Damoritosh, Meyel, Vesk Battle Saints

For a long time, Pulonis bristled under the control of the neighboring Veskarium empire. The planet's governing union of nations defied the mighty empire by declaring independence. Finally, the last of the loyalist Veskarium forces have departed after a series of brutal but brief skirmishes.

Before the Veskarium invaded and brought generations of war to Pulonis, seven nations thrived on the supercontinent and in the coastal islands skirting its fringes, occasionally vying for territories or trade routes but generally coexisting. As ceramics advanced and scientists developed rudimentary technology capable of weathering the world's sudden magnetic storms, Pulonis prospered, and pahtras began to build a military capable of challenging the Veskarium. Around this time, their neighboring conquerors invaded.

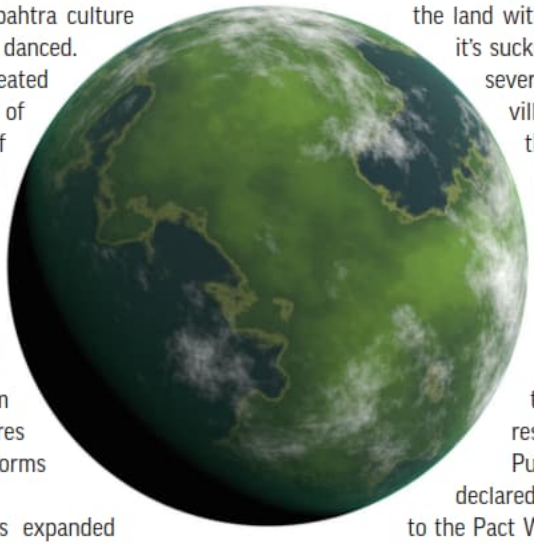
Life has always been a struggle on Pulonis, even before the Veskarium invasion. The pahtra home world is a primal planet with no polar ice caps and deep, treacherous oceans full of piscine terrors. Jagged mountains glare down on overgrown jungles beneath a shining aurora. Beautiful auroras draw awestruck tourist crowds every year but shut down technological infrastructure. Native tech incorporates ceramics, which protect sensitive technologies from the glitching effects of solar radiation.

Any visit to Pulonis begins on Starlance, a glittering port of call built inside a space elevator on an island that connects

to high-speed gravtrains darting across Pulonis's surface. To the northwest, Hafrerren was home to the original Krreyvash terrorist cells fighting the Veskarium not long ago. Today, facilities dedicated to treating and studying the disfigured troopers' health occupy the nation. Hafrerren's biotech laboratories are highly advanced, and many offworlders seek affordable care there.

The Fleet of Lameida has no fixed location. The nomadic children of Lameida's merchant and courier collectives proudly follow millennia-old tradition, flying magsail ships that soar on the electromagnetic currents naturally produced in Pulonis's atmosphere. A motley collection of vessels crewed by Lameidan nomads fly over Pulonis, stopping to weather difficult storms or wait out doldrums. Some children of Lameida are also loyal to the Free Captains, though taking a pirate vow is tantamount to renouncing one's merchant family, all their contracts, and your place in their caravan.

Ameyel is sometimes called the Holy Lands by offworlders. Grievously scarred by vesk bombardments, the twisted landscape was once a center of pahtra culture and a sacred location where Meyel danced.



Rafemii's population has retreated to fortified bunkers at the edge of Ameyel, where a new task force of Xenowardens, holy priests, and Stewards work together to purify and resettle the corrupted land. Rafemii's government continues working with the city of Voyedris to build up and maintain their fleet of Vahateen, mobile computing complexes created from large, magical, ceramic structures able to withstand both magnetic storms and enemy attacks.

Meanwhile, Voyedris itself has expanded to take over Command 6, the former military base recently ceded by Veskarium occupying forces. Hangars of ceramic mechs stand ready to drive back any Veskarium invaders who dare threaten Pulonian freedom.

The nation-state of Trenarez is the home of the singing coil, a cultural artifact originally created to be an instrument during times of peace and a weapon in times of war. Traditional priests of Meyel still practice the difficult art of playing the singing coil, though crude versions of the gorgeous, hand-carved instruments are now commonly manufactured all across the Pact Worlds. Anyone can purchase a souvenir replica, but true maestros draw a crowd when they perform.

Two moons hang in the Pulonian sky, commonly called Hinirinn and Yolaku. Both bear scars from Veskarium attacks. The Tereltos Sea and the Tideflight Ocean surge with tides that seem like tsunamis to outsiders; heroic fishers who brave these treacherous waters are local legends along the coast.

Deep in the jungles and tundra of the supercontinent, dreaded parasitic oozes called hymothoas form competitive, anarchic communities. Most kill their mates after reproduction, with the female typically living to lay her eggs in the male's corpse after he has fertilized them and given his life for their nourishment. They can also reproduce using the body of a host, usually an animal but sometimes a pahtra. Hymothoas are intelligent, malicious, and patient; they might watch a family of pahtras for years and not attack until an opportunity to take easy prey by surprise appears, often when a child is left unattended outside or a weary traveler stops to rest.

Some inhabitants of the Veskarium feel an inherent distrust toward shapeshifters because of hymothoas mercilessly taking hosts from both sides during the war on Pulonis. Hymothoas rarely appear outside the deep jungles of central Pulonis, but a few witch hunts have swept through national governments in the past, leaving a bloody trail through history that many Pulonians portentously recall when they fear paranoia is getting in the way of calm governance. But hymothoas are a real threat with unknown prevalence.

RECENT EVENTS

A dangerous magical storm called the Shriek scours the land with armaments from lost battleships it's sucked into its vortex. After wiping out several frontier outposts and razing villages on a path toward Shardwall, the Shriek unexpectedly turned and began spiraling south toward Leapfang Bay and the highly populated southwest Voyedris coast. Voyedris has declared a state of emergency, and its leaders are begging for aid from neighboring nations, who look the other way, unwilling to spare resources during uncertain times.

Pulonis is still adjusting to its newly declared independence and surprise entry to the Pact Worlds alliance. Cooperation doesn't come naturally to many pahtras, and though democratic governments make most of the decisions on Pulonis, these newly reformed institutions aren't immune to corruption, nepotism, backstabbing, and unhealthy competition. Some former leaders have fled, while a few stalwart manipulators discovered ways to benefit from the new status quo or pull the strings from behind the scenes.

Most of the politicians allied with Veskarium occupiers have forcibly retired. Former planetary governor Teret Kahan swiftly went into hiding following the rebellion, reportedly somewhere offworld. A few renegades believe some of his allies might have stayed behind in bunkers though, biding their time until they can reintegrate and undermine independent pahtra rule, opening a back door for their vesk allies.

Tensions remain high in many places on Pulonis, and vesk residents are sometimes viewed with suspicion by their longtime neighbors. Some leaders and ordinary citizens fear the Veskarium will retaliate with terrible force, and an undertone of dread is tangible, especially among communities hit hard by the last skirmishes.

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NEAR SPACE

Beyond the Pact Worlds are countless charted and uncharted star systems accessible due to the church of Triune's Drift beacons. The concentration of these beacons allows for relatively short flights through the Drift to reach their destination, which has led to the region becoming known as Near Space. Noted for the presence of the mighty Veskarium, Near Space is also home to myriad other species and civilizations. The relatively short distance from the Pact Worlds means that threats emerging from these regions could strike at any moment, and ports of call are only a short trip away.

Three years after the Gap, Triune dispatched the Signal to most civilizations and imparted them each with Drift travel. Along with the knowledge of Drift travel came the insight on how to develop Drift beacons, information bequeathed even less frequently than that of the Drift engines and typically only to those devoting themselves to Triune.

Triune's faithful formed congregations to create and maintain Drift beacons, then sent out squads of tech priests and their bodyguards to install them across the galaxy, expanding the range of travel available to sentient organisms, as is Triune's will.

Systems located close to Drift beacons became classified as Near Space. Many of them constructed their own beacons in close proximity and found they enhance one another, creating relatively stable Drift travel routes compared to systems with sparser access to Drift beacons, or none at all.

In a technical sense, the Pact Worlds are part of Near Space. Worlds within Near Space are linked to one another through ease of travel and Drift proximity, yet precious few treaties keep the peace in Near Space. The Pact System's early wars with the Veskarium were but one of the nascent conflicts between Near Space powers, and luckily the two have (mostly) resolved their differences.

VESKARIUM

The mighty interstellar empire of vesk and the civilizations it has incorporated (or subjugated) resides within the Ghavaniska System in Near Space, along with a handful of satellite colonies. Guided by an ancestral worship of

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the war deity Damoritosh, the Veskarium's earliest wars following the Gap saw them enter a bitterly prolonged conflict with the Pact Worlds, only for them to ally with their former foes in the face of overwhelming aggression from a vicious branch of the voracious Swarm. Today, the Veskarium has recovered from the Swarm wars, combining a population longing for purpose with a resurgent military.

This revival occurred seemingly just in time for a new era of conflict. First, the sudden declaration of war between the Veskarium and the Azlanti Star Empire shocked the galaxy as part of escalating events in the Adalawe System surrounding the world of Kehtaria. A bloody coup within the Star Empire's leadership led to more aggressive tactics against the contested system, which has since burst into outright war between the two powers using the newly established Drift Lanes that have effectively connected them despite the Star Empire's base of power existing in the Vast.

Then one of the Veskarium's erstwhile subjects declared independence. The world previously known as Vesk-6—now reclaiming its original name of Pulonis, joined the Pact Worlds. The indigenous pahtras, along with allies from the Pact Worlds and other regions, managed to shake off their Veskarium overlords and reclaim independence, seeking support from the more powerful federation.

The vote to allow contested Pulonis into the Pact Worlds alliance was a contentious and dramatic televised event that split the Pact Worlds population and their elected representatives nearly in half.

The stunning final vote of Apostae shifted the balance, and many analysts and conspiracists assume the azrinaran elves voted simply to spite their isolationist Sovyrian cousins. In response, the Veskarium recalled diplomats from the Pact Worlds and called for economic sanctions, but they've yet to take little more than token actions. Unofficially, some speculate they might be choosing not to manage pahtra uprisings alongside their war against the Azlanti Star Empire. Many people fear a dreadful conflict in the distant future between the two Near Space powers is inevitable, while others cite it as an omen of the era of universal peace that will begin after the wars cease.

GIDERON & MARIXAH

Two growing powers within Near Space are the Gideron Authority and Marixah Republic. Both civilizations were originally founded as pre-Gap offshoots from the Pact Worlds System, with notable populations of aiuvarins and hobgoblins taking part in the expeditions that established their seed colonies.

Once, the two powers were joined as part of a Gap-era hobgoblin empire, but the Gap's aftermath shattered the coalition. Now, the Marixah Republic is a democratic civilization that claims to seek peace with its neighbors and to express itself with open politics and discussions on policies. Conversely, the Gideron Authority is an increasingly militarized state that has constantly antagonized its neighbor, most recently annexing the Acalata System from the Republic.

Military analysts believe it's only a matter of time before the escalating conflict between the two powers ignites into open warfare. Speculators believe that such a war is one the Pact Worlds would involve themselves in, due to their cordial relations with the Marixah Republic. The Authority seems willing not to increase their aggressive tactics, operating under instructions from the rising military commander, Coordinator **Tegrin Metrid** (calculating male hobgoblin strategist). This hobgoblin officer has coordinated unorthodox military movements that continue to stymie the Republic's analysis, all while obfuscating renewed relations with the Hellknights of the Order of the Crucible and even some azrinaran corporations within the Pact Worlds.

SZANDITE COLLECTIVE

Spread throughout four far-flung star systems, the seven worlds of the Szandite Collective became connected after a shower of mysterious crystals allowed them to initiate psychic communication over long distances. The worlds kept up this mystical communion for the rest of recorded history with one exception: the disappearance of Krethiskar during the earliest days of communication. Following the Gap and the transmission of the Signal, the remaining worlds formed into a coalition of mutual cooperation and defense against outside threats, naming themselves after the crystals that linked them. They've since become a developing civilization within Near Space and a reliable trading partner with the Pact Worlds, Veskarium, and other Near Space powers.

Events took a turn for the worse in 324 AG, when the Starfinder Society discovered a planet some of their agents believed to be Krethiskar. Following up on the lead with an expedition, the Society's agents quickly discovered what happened to the missing Szandite world: it was consumed by the Swarm. The expedition enacted a rapid retreat when dormant Swarm entities awoke and quickly overran the barren world. The Krethiskar Swarm branch quickly reverse engineered the science of Drift travel from the minds of captured Starfinders and have now expanded their brutal attacks to the nearby worlds of the Szandite Collective.

NOTABLE REGIONS

Along with the previously listed civilizations, Near Space is home to hundreds of star systems. Notable among them is the colossi-dominated world of Daimalko, where the damai population and their allies battle against colossi in the cockpits of powerful mechs known as valkos. The coral copaxi of Tabrid Minor seek to reverse the climate crisis on their world while respectfully reclaiming the ancient magical flying cities they've long since abandoned. The immense gas giant of Preluria and its 23 orbiting bodies provide a refuge for smugglers and miscreants seeking a place to lay low, as long as they can avoid the psychic oozes. The violet stone world of Embroi and its embri population welcome outsiders to their world, but most remain unaware that the world is a stronghold of Hell within the Universe.



THE VAST

The Vast is everything in the galaxy beyond the Drift beacon dense region of Near Space. One can easily assume that means the Vast is physically furthest from the Pact Worlds, but the truth is that a system in the Vast could be relatively close but lack any nearby Drift beacons to make the connection. Because of its relative distance from Absalom Station, the Vast takes weeks or months to travel to, while only requiring a handful of days at most to return from. It's the edge of exploration in the cosmos where the most yet-to-be-discovered dangers and wonders lurk.

Locations that have few Drift beacons–or none at all–take much longer to reach even with Drift engines equipped. These remote destinations are referred to as the Vast.

The mass of space known as the Vast is a seemingly endless expanse of stars full of mysterious and mundane locations for churches, governments, corporations, and factions to explore. Yet even these powerful groups can't hope to contend with the sheer scale of the Vast, and so it just as often falls to small groups of adventurers to travel through the Drift to these secluded systems in search of anything of interest to bring back or a reason to put down roots. However, for every system that contains the ruins of an ancient civilization or magical equations to upend the fundamental understanding of magic in the Universe, there are desolate systems with only dead rocks and little more.

Members of the Pact Council take wildly differing views on the benefits and dangers of deeper exploration into the Vast. Most people seem content to let other agencies, like corporations or the Starfinder Society, take the lead on such missions, as it keeps the Pact Worlds' guardian Stewards and other planetary factions theoretically free from foreign political entanglements. Events like the Starfinder Society's expedition into the Scoured Stars still rankle many politicians, who fear that even allowing such organizations the freedom to explore without rules is a recipe to "stir the Swarm," a popular saying in reference to aggravating theoretical threats that might be lurking within the Vast.

AZLANTI STAR EMPIRE

In 269 AG, a Starfinder Society starship formally encountered a war vessel loyal to the Azlanti Star Empire. The imperial craft swiftly destroyed the Starfinder vessel. Since then, relations between the Azlanti and Pact Worlds have been one

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of apprehension and tension, with neither daring to test the limits of their fragile peace.

The Azlanti Star Empire was founded by descendants of a powerful human nation on lost Golarion who were thought to be wiped out during a cataclysmic asteroid impact in the distant past. A group of survivors' grandchildren used powerful magic to settle on the distant world of New Thespera, which would become the seat of rulership for a new empire based loosely on what they perceived as their ancestors' glorious culture. After the Gap, Azlanti scientists developed Drift travel and began subjugating nearby systems and expanded their empire to include dozens of systems within only a few centuries. Countless worlds were settled and conquered by the elite Aeon Guard.

Traditionally, a Star Imperator ruled from the Azlanti seat of leadership, the *Aeon Throne*. Up until only a year ago, this position was held by twins of the Ixomander dynasty, who decided to jointly rule the empire. However, a sudden coup undertaken by the Star Empire's leading religious figure, Ishmerai Ophir, ended with the twins supposedly slain. Now, the self-declared regent has deployed a new echelon of troopers in the form of the Sihedron Guard and has initiated a war with the Veskarium as a means of rallying his people around a common cause calculated to cement his influence over the Azlanti people.

Jinsul Hierocracy

In 316 AG the Starfinder Society once again united under the leadership of its First Seeker, Jadnura. The kasatha leader's mandate would send the Society into a region of space known as the Scoured Stars, accidentally awaken a dormant deity, and rile his servants to action. Even after bloody battles and a climactic showdown within the Scoured Stars, the vicious jinsuls of the Jinsul Hierocracy remain an ever-present danger within the Vast after Jadnura's ill-fated expedition unleashed them into the wider galaxy.

A species of six-legged chitinous creatures, all known jinsuls follow their hierarch leaders into an eternal war against species whom they view as inferior.

Once believed to be xenophobes targeting intruders to their system, jinsuls have proven time and again that they cannot tolerate other species that aren't sanctioned by their god Kadrical or one of their religious leaders.

Some jinsuls subject demons to imprisonment and view themselves as conquerors of the most heinous creatures the cosmos have to offer, and they relish using their fiendish subjects as fodder and troops in their wars against all other civilizations. Unlike most threats, jinsuls are nihilistic and have an utter disregard for sentient life, believing all others must be exterminated, save those chosen species who they must once unite under the light of the Scoured Stars.

Kazmurg's Absurdity

Within the depths of the Vast is a subset of space known to the Pact Worlds as Kazmurg's Absurdity in recognition of the Starfinder who first discovered it. Simply dubbed the Absurdity by most residents and visitors, the region is known for a unique phenomenon causing interstellar travel to be broken. Ships, even those attempting to use the Drift to travel, must possess or have read physical charts and maps of their destination within the Absurdity. While a star chart isn't a useful tool for Drift travel, somehow the knowledge of the chart's contents is the only way of exploring the system. This utterly baffling effect has rendered the region a nightmare for traditional enterprises, like outside governments or corporations, but a unique opportunity for adventurers who seek the challenge of uncovering hidden charts and unlocking new regions to explore.

The settlement known as the Second City on the world of Invemi-2 rests at the Absurdity's outer edge and is advertised by local governments as the gateway into the region. From here, travelers have a natural foothold to explore the Cooperative of Worlds. This federation is a group of allied planets comprising the tattered remnants of a once-proud interstellar coalition wrecked by a merciless data virus.

Other entrepreneurs and mercenaries might sell their services to the local corporations of the icy world of Likitch Nur. Troopers and spies might try to evade the blockades of the Eimehre Virtuum, as the regional empire has recently annexed several charted systems in the region. Explorers might also uncover ancient mausoleums belonging to the Prophets of Kalistrade, who sent missions from the faraway Pact System long before the Gap. Adventurers might even uncover perilous ancient ruins left by the prehistoric Acsie civilization and stumble upon their ancient sentinels, including cursed constructs and bound daemons of Abaddon.

Worlds Unknown

Only a tiny fraction of the Vast has actually been explored, and it could take lifetimes to even catalog even a small percentage of the systems that remain. Whether it be single star systems hidden within the void or extensive interstellar empires with hundreds of star systems, the Vast could hold any number of secrets and dangers for those seeking to explore its depths. Some of these include:

- The breakaway Eoxian undead Corpse Fleet hides in dozens of systems, building up power and forcibly recruiting new undead agents to join their hidden war against the Pact Worlds.
- The nuclear wasteland of Elytrio has only recently uncovered the truth of its past, and two subspecies descended from the conflict continue to figure out how to coexist.
- The Shadari Confederacy dwells at the edge of Azlanti space, doing its best to remain in the shadows and avoid the notice of the behemoths warring around it.
- The Jinsul Hierocracy and their anarchic offshoots seize territory in the Vast where they're safe from retaliation by the Stewards and other protective forces.
- The Krethiskar Swarm branch has infested backwater worlds for untold generations but has insidiously begun testing the borders of Szandite Collective worlds.
- After the convergence between the Riven Shroud and the First Pillar of Evolution, synchronistic events rocked the Vast, signaling the start of a cosmic shift or an ancient revival.

THE PLANES

Beyond the confines of the Universe lie the vast planes of existence referred to as the Great Beyond. Often alien and dangerous, most of these planes embody some foundational aspect of reality—one of the chief elements that make up the rest of the multiverse or a kind of fundamental energy. Each plane is a reality unto itself, with its own laws of existence and its own native inhabitants who might visit, grant benefits to residents of, or cause havoc on the Universe.

PLANAR TRAITS

Each plane, dimension, and demiplane has its own properties and attributes. Planar traits can be broken down into five categories: scope, gravity, time, morphic, and planar essence. Combined, those traits describe the laws and makeup of the plane. These appear in the plane's traits entry, though any trait that matches the Universe (described in the Normal entry in each section below) is omitted.

SCOPE TRAIT

Most planes are immeasurable, so immense they're impossible to quantify. Which immeasurable planes, if any, are infinite is a subject of debate among philosophers and scholars alike. Since so many planes are immeasurable, those planes omit a scope trait. Otherwise, the plane likely has either the finite or unbounded trait.

Finite: Finite planes consist of a limited amount of space.

Immeasurable: Immeasurable planes are immeasurably large, perhaps infinite.

Unbounded: Unbounded planes loop back on themselves when a creature reaches the plane's "edge."

GRAVITY TRAITS

Many planes have unusual gravity.

Normal: Bodies of great mass are the centers of gravity, and objects fall toward those centers with a measured amount of force relative to the size of the body.

High Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is greater than in the Universe. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is doubled, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry only half as much. Creatures used to normal gravity move at half Speed and can jump only half as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are impossible beyond the third range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in high gravity take bludgeoning damage equal to the distance they fell.

Low Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is less than in the Universe. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is halved, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry twice as much and jump twice as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are possible up to the twelfth range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in low gravity take no damage for the first 10 feet of a fall, and then take bludgeoning damage equal to a quarter of the remaining distance it fell.

Microgravity: There's little to no gravity on this plane. Creatures float in space unless they can push off a surface or use some force to propel themselves throughout the plane.

Strange Gravity: All bodies of mass are centers of gravity with roughly the same force. A creature can stand on any solid objects that's as large as or larger than themself.

Subjective Gravity: All bodies of mass can be centers of gravity with the same force, but only if a non-mindless creature wills it. Unattended items, objects, and mindless creatures treat the plane as having microgravity. Creatures on a plane with subjective gravity can move normally along a solid surface by imagining "down" near their feet. Designating this downward direction is a free action that has the concentrate trait. If suspended in midair, a creature can replicate flight by choosing a "down" direction and falling in that direction, moving up to their Speed or fly Speed. This pseudo-flight uses the Fly action.

TIME TRAITS

Time flows differently on many planes.

Normal: Time passes the same way it does in the Universe. One hour on a plane with normal time equals 1 hour in the Universe.

Erratic: Time slows down and speeds up, so an individual might lose or gain time as they move between planes. When a creature moves from a plane with erratic time to one with normal time, roll a DC 11 flat check. Creatures that leave an erratic time plane together share the same result.

Success Time passed normally on the erratic time plane.

Failure For each hour spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Critical Failure For each round spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Flowing: The flow of time is consistently faster or slower. A creature might travel to one of these planes, spend a year there, and find that only an hour passed in the Universe; alternatively, they might spend a minute on this plane and find out an hour passed in the Universe.

Timeless: Time still passes, but the effects of time are diminished. Creatures on these planes don't feel hunger, thirst,

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or the effects of aging or natural healing. The effects of poison, diseases, and other kinds of healing might also be diminished on certain timeless planes. Spell energy and other effects still dissipate, so the durations of spells and other effects function as normal. The danger of this trait is that when a creature leaves a timeless plane and enters a plane with another time trait, the effects of hunger, thirst, aging, and other effects slowed or arrested by the timeless trait occur retroactively in the instant of transition, possibly causing the creature to immediately starve or die of old age.

MORPHIC TRAITS

This trait describes how easily the physical nature of the plane can be changed. The Universe is considered the norm for its residents, but other planes can warp through the plane's own sentient designs or be manipulated by extremely powerful creatures.

Normal: Objects remain where they are (and what they are) unless affected by physical force or magic. Creatures can change the immediate environment as a result of tangible effort, such as by digging a hole.

Metamorphic: Things change by means other than physical force or magic. Sometimes spells have morphic effects. Other times, the plane's nature is under the control of a deity or power, or the plane simply changes at random.

Sentient: The plane changes based on its own whims.

Static: Visitors can't affect living residents of the plane or objects the denizens carry in any way. Any spells that would affect those on the plane have no effect unless the static trait is somehow removed or suppressed.

PLANAR ESSENCE TRAITS

Planar essence traits describe a plane's fundamental nature. For example, many of the Inner Sphere's planes are infused with an element or energy, each of which affects magic on those planes, and the Netherworld is awash with shadow. Outer Planes are fundamentally made up of quintessence, a philosophically aligned material with infinite potential for shape and state that conforms to powerful and prevailing beliefs.

Air: Planes with this trait consist mostly of open spaces and air of various levels of turbulence, though they also contain rare islands of floating stone and other elements and energies. Air planes usually have breathable atmospheres, though they might include clouds of acidic or toxic gas. Earth creatures often find themselves at a disadvantage within air planes, as there's little solid ground for them to gain their bearings, which tends to at least make them uncomfortable.

Earth: These planes are mostly solid. Travelers arriving upon an earth plane risk suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or some other air pocket within the plane's solid matter. Creatures who can't burrow are entombed in the plane's substance and must attempt to dig their way toward an air pocket. Air creatures are ill at ease, as they rarely have the space to move freely through even the loftiest warrens.

Fire: Planes with this trait are composed of flames that continually burn with no fuel source. Fire planes are extremely hostile to non-fire creatures. Unprotected wood, paper, cloth, and other flammable materials catch fire almost immediately, and creatures wearing unprotected flammable clothing catch fire, typically taking 1d6 persistent fire damage. Extraplanar creatures take moderate environmental fire damage at the end of each round (sometimes minor environmental damage in safer areas, or major or massive damage in even more fiery areas). Ice creatures are extremely uncomfortable on a fire plane, assuming they don't outright melt in the heat.

Metal: These planes consist of chaotic and shifting structures and oceans of metal. Metal planes tend to exist in a state of change and decay, leaving plentiful pockets of air for visitors to breathe or move within. Creatures unlucky enough to be entombed in the plane's substance risk suffocation if they can't phase through metal. Wood creatures find the lack of stability and soil on a metal plane disconcerting and often fail to thrive in such environments.

Water: Planes with this trait are mostly liquid. Visitors who can't breathe water or reach an air pocket likely drown. The rules for aquatic combat (*Player Core* 429) usually apply, including the inability to cast fire spells or use actions with the fire trait. Creatures with a weakness to water take damage equal to double their weakness at the end of each round.

Wood: These planes consist of trees and other flora latticed in organic patterns. Wood planes are often perfectly constructed to match their desired purpose or environment but aren't usually outright hostile to visitors.

Shadow: Planes with this trait are umbral with murky light. In the Netherworld, the radius of all light from light sources and the areas of light spells are halved.

Void: Planes with this trait are vast, empty reaches that suck the life from the living. They tend to be lonely, haunted planes, drained of color and filled with winds carrying the moans of the dead. At the end of each round, a living creature takes at least minor void environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a void plane, they could take moderate or even major void damage at the end of each round. This damage has the death trait, and if a living creature is reduced to 0 Hit Points by this void damage and killed, it crumbles into ash and can become a wraith or other undead creature.

Vitality: These planes are awash with life energy. Colors are brighter, fires are hotter, noises are louder, and sensations are more intense. At the end of each round, an undead creature takes at least minor vitality environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a vitality plane, they could take moderate or even major vitality damage instead. While this might seem safe for living creatures, vitality planes present a different danger. Living creatures regain an amount of HP each round equal to the environmental damage undead take in the same area. If this would bring the living creature above their maximum HP, any excess becomes temporary HP. Unlike normal, these temporary HP combine with each other, and they last until the creature leaves the plane. If a creature's temporary HP from a vitality plane ever exceeds its maximum HP, it explodes in a burst of overloaded vitality energy, spreading across the area to birth new souls.



PLANAR STAT BLOCKS

Each of the planes listed in the following pages includes a short stat block of key information. The plane's type—whether it's a plane, dimension, or demiplane—appears in the stat block's heading, followed by the traits that define that plane. The following entries also provide important information about each plane.

Category: This indicates whether the plane is an Inner Plane, Outer Plane, Transitive Plane, or dimension.

Divinities: A list of all of the deities, demigods, and other powers that call this realm their home.

Native Inhabitants: A sample of typical inhabitants of the plane. Also listed are the plane's shades, the souls of dead mortals who have been judged and sent on to whichever plane reflects the life they led.

INNER SPHERE PLANES

The planes of the Inner Sphere form the heart of the cosmos. They're the home of mortal life, the focus of divine attention, the source of mortal souls, and the origin point of the great cycle of quintessence that fuels the motions and stability of reality itself. Arranged in a nested series of shells, like layers of an onion, the planes of the Inner Sphere include, from outer to inner: the elemental planes of fire, earth, metal, water, wood, and air; the mortal galaxies of the Universe; and at the very core of this cosmological ensemble, the raw forces of creation and destruction of Creation's Forge and the Void overlap the Universe.

THE UNIVERSE — PLANE

Category Inner Plane
Divinities The Newborn, Weydan
Native Inhabitants androids, barathus, humans, kasathas, lashuntas, pahtras, shirrens, skittermanders, vesk, ysoki, and countless other species

The Universe is the prosaic realm and the home of mortal life. Innumerable galaxies contain countless stars and planets, each housing unique settings for any campaign, with the galaxy of Desna's Spiral as the classic example. The Pact System is the unofficial core of this galaxy, thanks to the presence of the *Starstone*, while countless other galaxies could be home to entirely different worlds, such as the distant solar system containing the planet Earth.

The Universe serves as the destination for pre-incarnate souls, each mortal life born, living, and dying before sending its spirit toward the planes of the Outer Sphere for judgment. The Universe is likewise the focus of the gods, each of whom is invested in fostering their particular portfolio among mortal worshippers on the countless worlds within.

CREATION'S FORGE — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY | UNBOUNDED | VITALITY

Category Inner Plane
Divinities none
Native Inhabitants jyotis, shades (enlightened)

Creation's Forge is at once the source of life-sustaining vitality energy, the origin of all pre-incarnate mortal souls, and

paradoxically the most innately hostile of all of the planes. While vitality energy is deadly to undead and beneficial to living beings, such is the intensity of the plane that unmitigated exposure ultimately incinerates any extraplanar beings without sufficient magical protection. The most apt comparison for the plane's interior is that of the heart of a burning star. The stars of the Universe each house natural portals to Creation's Forge within their glowing, potent cores to foster the movement of pre-incarnate souls in their first steps in the great cycle of life and death.

Brilliant and blinding, the plane's interior is sparsely populated, and the resident phoenix-kin jyotis view the Universe with active disdain. Some beachheads, such as the planar gateways to the Invemian System in the region of space known as Kazmurg's Absurdity, contain defensive garrisons of jyotis who guard their territory. A few scientific endeavors have utilized magitech innovations to travel into Creation's Forge and set up research outposts to try and answer the most pressing questions of creation and the origins of the soul.

THE VOID — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY | UNBOUNDED | VOID

Category Inner Plane

Divinities none

Native Inhabitants sceaduinars, wraiths, and other undead

The vast nothingness of the Void is a merciless, lightless expanse of manifest destruction and nihilism. Sapping and consuming the life force of any living creature exposed to its energies, it corrodes and disintegrates material objects to rubble, then dust, and then nothing at all, yet the Void contains its own form of anti-life. At their densest concentration, the plane's energies aggregate into bizarre, black crystalline snowflake structures. These irregularities spontaneously generate the plane's resident sceaduinars. Dwelling in exquisitely lethal cities drifting in the vacuous darkness, these so-called void raptors are incapable of true creation and blame this flaw on some ancient betrayal by their rivals in Creation's Forge. Sceaduinars react violently not only toward creatures sustained by vitality energy, but also toward undead, whom they view as unnatural parasites unworthy of their plane's energies.

The deepest depths of the plane house the most resilient of undead creatures, which survive the constant entropy by virtue of their unliving state. Perhaps one of the most hazardous regions in the Great Beyond, the plane remains in a state of constant entropic advance that technology has yet to overcome. Some brave (or foolish) explorers make their way into the Void, whether to research or hide away from greater threats. Scores of Corpse Fleet agents fled here from the Universe, establishing great shipyards in the plane's most barren realms. The Degradation Swarm, a sentient swarm of self-replicating entropic nanites, meanders through the plane like a roiling thundercloud that converts everything in its path, with some of its tendrils being summoned into other planes of existence.

PLANE OF AIR — PLANE

AIR | SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Inner Plane

ENHANCED AND IMPEDED MAGIC

Some particularly potent areas can enhance magic related to the nature of the plane or impede magic inimical to it. For instance, a nexus of void energy in the Void might enhance void magic, and the unholy majesty of an archdevil's throne room might impede holy magic.

Enhanced Magic: Anyone Casting a Spell with the enhanced trait gains a +1 circumstance bonus to their spell DC or spell attack roll with that spell.

Impeded Magic: A character who Casts a Spell or activates an item with the specified trait must succeed at a DC 6 flat check or the spell or activation is disrupted.

Divinities elemental lords of air

Native Inhabitants air elementals, cloud dragons, jaathooms, shades (air pneuma)

The Plane of Air, innermost of the Elemental Planes, is a vast realm of wind, storms, and skies. Illuminated by great artificial globes of flame and distant starlight from the material universe, the plane is populated by air elementals, dragons, air scamps, and an empire of jaathoom genies. Though mostly clouds and empty skies, the plane isn't entirely bereft of solid ground, including rock and ice created by the residents or dragged into their realm from the distant Plane of Earth or neighboring Plane of Water. The regrown pockets of the Plane of Wood have let loose giant pieces of driftwood into the plane as well. Bizarre, drifting spheres of brass and iron make for the most convenient navigational aids. The brass spheres have become known for housing the magitech metropolises of the vast Jaathoom Empire. The iron spheres were once shunned but have since become the site of constant extraplanar activity as corporations from the Universe establish Axis-reviewed contracts to mine these lucrative sites. Such mining endeavors have led to some material corporations abandoning their primary operations in the Universe and switching their focus to the Plane of Air.

The jaathooms rule from their shining capital city of Armun Kelisk, built atop a series of 10 floating islands. Stable planar gateways grant the Jaathoom Empire access to the skies of countless planes, but the pre-Gap innovation of the elemental engine once allowed starships to traverse the Plane of Air to circumvent long interstellar travel times. The advent of Drift engines challenged jaathoom dominance in interstellar trade, and some ruthless jaathoom merchant lords have since sought means of destabilizing Drift reliability.

For the past few centuries, the Plane of Air has been a political free-for-all. Jaathoom factions grab for power and influence while cloud dragon diplomats and barathu entrepreneurs seek footholds in the chaotic sky cities. Little is known of the plane's two reigning elemental lords: Hshurha the Duchess of All Winds and Ranginori, the Duke of Thunder. None have heard from the duchess since the end of the Gap, and even some of her attendants believe she's exiled or imprisoned, though she still grants spells to her supporters. Conversely, Ranginori has

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recruited countless agents in secret to spread his teachings into the Drift, much to the consternation of the Jaathoom Empire.

PLANE OF EARTH — PLANE

EARTH

Category Inner Plane
Divinities elemental lords of earth
Native Inhabitants crystal dragons, earth elementals, jabalis, shades (earth pneuma)

A great and rocky shell situated between the Plane of Fire and Plane of Water, the Eternal Delve hosts a unique and varied ecology of creatures at home in its rocky depths. Far from an endless, solid expanse, the Plane of Earth is riddled with great caverns and cave systems, excavated artificial vaults, vast crystalline geodes, and underground oceans and springs of magma where it borders its neighboring planes. Housing untold riches in gemstones and veins of precious metals, the Plane of Earth is an attractive setting for planar travelers seeking wealth and willing to risk danger and the wrath of elementals, jabalis, and other inhabitants who resent the plunder of their home.

Along with the Plane of Metal, the Plane of Earth has seen the most active interest from groups within the Universe seeking to exploit the plane for its abundant resources. Corporate- and government-sponsored planar strike teams routinely cross dimensional boundaries to execute tightly timed extraction and mining operations. Such actions rankle the hospitality of the jabali genies and their Peerless Empire, resulting in an ever-changing litany of treaties and sanctions between the Peerless Empire and representatives of a few powerful mining conglomerates from the Universe, including several dwarven clan corporations.

PLANE OF FIRE — PLANE

FIRE

Category Inner Plane
Divinities elemental lords of fire
Native Inhabitants fire elementals, ifrits, magma dragons, munsahirs, shades (fire pneuma)

Like a great, gleaming ball of flame situated at the heart of the Astral Plane, the Plane of Fire is the outermost plane of the Inner Sphere. A perpetual ocean of fire with skies of smoke, storms of raining cinders, and lakes and rivers of magma flowing along its border with the Elemental Plane of Earth, the plane is incredibly hostile to those unprepared for its natural hazards.

This inhospitable realm is known most for one of the most visited metropolises in all cosmology: Medina Mudii'a, the bustling magitech hub of the Dominion of Flame. A spectacle of the tyrannical ifrits and their subjugation of much of the plane, Medina Mudii'a houses their vast armies and is home to the current grand sultana, **Ayasellah Mihelar Khalidlah VI** (inspiring female ifrit sultana). The sultana has a less aggressive hand than her predecessors, and she rules with an appointed committee of advisors. Speculation is rife about the Dominion of Flame's smoldering ambitions, which seem to have coincided with the sudden disappearance of the elemental lord, Ymeri the Queen of the Inferno. Ymeri's disappearance is linked to the detonation of her former home, the Auroric Palace, which has since become the Auroric Crater.

PLANE OF METAL — PLANE

METAL

Category Inner Plane
Divinities elemental lords of metal
Native Inhabitants metal elementals, shades (metal pneuma), taloses, zuhras

The most sought-after plane by foreign interests in the modern technological age, the Plane of Metal is a cosmological juggernaut. Consisting of metals of every kind, including liquids and solids, the Plane of Metal is an expanse of cityscapes and oppressive magnetic fields. Even composite metals and swarms of rust flow freely throughout this plane, and the realm's chaotic nature seems only tamed by the ever-increasing presence of magitech settlements. Scattered zuhra genies have suffered greatly from extraplanar exploitation and seek to rebuild their plane.

Laudinmio, the Sovereign of Alchemy, and Ferrumnestra, the Lady of Rust, are the two elemental lords of the plane. While other elemental lords often squabble or outright battle one another, the Plane of Metal's protectors have finally enacted a stable peace, allowing them and their servants to protect the plane from those seeking to harvest metals without regard for the ecological impact.

PLANE OF WATER — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY | WATER

Category Inner Plane
Divinities elemental lords of water
Native Inhabitants brine dragons, faydhaans, shades (water pneuma), water elementals

Beyond the skies of the Plane of Air, the roots of the Plane of Wood are nurtured by the vast, spherical, liquid shell of the Plane of Water. Its nearly limitless stretches of saline, fresh, and brackish seas teem with all manner of oceanic life, lit by submerged suns and bioluminescence before descending into the black, benthic depths where the plane borders the Plane of Earth. While it's perfectly amenable to water-breathing creatures, air-breathing travelers must provide their own magical or technological means to breathe while on the plane. Pressurized magic and metal moving cities trawl the varied depths of the plane, constructed and operated by faydhaan genies who have begun the process of reclaiming their once-discarded empire. These settlements provide harbor for those seeking to escape other planes or those visiting briefly for trade or other business.

The previously numerous empires of merfolk have since been obliterated, with the significant majority of the species' survivors now taking on the solemn duty of guarding the imprisoned elemental lord, Kelizandri the Brackish Emperor. Sometime during the Gap, Kelizandri was overthrown and impaled by four vast magitech spears that pin him to the border of the Plane of Earth. Since then, Lysianassa, Empress of the Torrent, has come to prominence and helped usher the once-despondent faydhaans into a new golden age of trade and planar supremacy.

Unlike other subjective gravity planes, on the Plane of Water, a creature moves based on its swim Speed and must use actions to Swim if it doesn't have one.

PLANE OF WOOD — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY | WOOD

Category Inner Plane
Divinities elemental lords of wood
Native Inhabitants ardandes, forest dragons, kizidhars, kodama, shades (wood pneuma), wood elementals

The Plane of Wood exists between the Plane of Water and Air. The plane had a great resurgence following its return from seclusion in ages past but has since fallen into a state of rampancy. Like a fractal tree growth, it has seen less and less tending and shaping and has instead begun devolving into regions of asymmetry. The genies of the plane, kizidhars, once tended to the plane's growth as artists but now do so more out of duress and necessity than for enjoyment.

Thanks to the technological evolution provided to countless civilizations by Triune's Signal, the importance of the Plane of Wood has greatly diminished. Civilizations in the Universe seek to build technological feats, focusing their attention on the resources from the Planes of Earth and Metal. Even factions like the Xenowardens can't provide support to the Plane of Wood as they focus their efforts on the rampant destruction of ecologies in the Universe. The two elemental lords of the plane have had a former disagreement escalate into all-out conflict. Shumunue, the Carved Lady of Mimicry, has sought to guide the plane's inhabitants to focus their efforts on tending the plane's rampant growth. Meanwhile, Verilorn, Custodian of Oak and Ash, radicalizes many to try to once again cut off the Plane of Wood from the other elemental realms in an effort to protect themselves and stem the ongoing threatening growth.

TRANSITIVE PLANES

At a minimum, each Transitive Plane coexists with one or more other planes, a relationship oversimplified by stating that Transitive Planes are just used to get from one plane to another. The Drift has mysterious one-way connections to every plane, though those same planes can't access the Drift except through the same technology necessary by those in the Universe. The mists of the Ethereal Plane overlap the planes of the Inner Sphere, while the Astral Plane borders every other plane in existence like the backstage of the cosmos. Bright and dark mirrors of the Universe, the First World and the Netherworld overlap the mortal world, albeit often in bizarre ways such that a short distance in one might be a vast gulf in the other. The daring, wise, or desperate can utilize these planes to bypass barriers in the Universe or rapidly cross vast distances through much swifter travel.

ASTRAL PLANE — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY | TIMELESS

Category Transitive Plane
Divinities Besmara
Native Inhabitants shades (untethered), shining children

Known as the Silver Sea, the Astral Plane surrounds the other planes of the Inner Sphere, separating them from the Outer Sphere. The River of Souls flows into this realm from the Universe, and souls move on from here toward the Boneyard for their final judgment.

As magic and technology fuse, more expeditions and probes into the Astral Plane have led to theologians and metaphysicists in the Universe observing the plane and its properties directly. Such explorers and scientists often find themselves threatened by soul-hunting daemons and other predators seeking their preferred food source–souls. The beings known as psychopomps lead a cross-section of nearly every type of celestial and monitor in existence, along with some fiends, to defend the flow of souls from predators and scavengers. Increasingly, this coalition of defenders also operates to keep the ever-increasing flow of "nosy mortals" out of their affairs and prevent them from affecting the ordained flow of the Universe's cosmology.

Travelers within the Astral sea find the plane untouched by the passage of time, a property exploited by many mortals fearing old age. Time, however, isn't easily escaped, and upon exiting the Astral Plane, a creature finds this debt catching up to them, potentially aging to dust in moments.

THE DRIFT — PLANE

METAMORPHIC | SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Transitive Plane
Divinities Triune
Native Inhabitants spectra

A sea of shifting colors, the Drift is the newest cosmological plane to appear. It first appeared 300 years ago when the tripartite deity, Triune, sent the Signal to all mortal species in the Universe. The Signal contained instructions for the creation of Drift engines that allowed technologically-advanced species to enter the new hyperspace plane and cross long distances at a much faster rate than using conventional space travel. With this advent, interstellar travel changed forever as countless species developed countless more engines, using the Drift to achieve faster-than-light travel previously tied to esoteric (or highly proprietary) equipment.

As only the technology of Drift engines can achieve entry into the Drift, other planes of existence remain relatively cut off from the plane, with one notable exception. In rare cases, when a Drift engine is activated, it somehow pulls a chunk of extraplanar matter from a seemingly random plane into the Drift with it. Matter pulled into the plane this way often emerges well beyond the scanners of a vessel, and most ships could never uncover the results of their engine's use. Still, it has led to a slow and steady buildup of extraplanar enclaves and holdouts across the emptiness of the Drift. While traveling in a starship to a destination, it isn't unheard of to encounter a group of celestials forced into piracy or a fiend-sponsored trading port.

The only native inhabitants of the Drift are the mysterious spectra and the deity, Triune. Spectra are unique beings created by the attraction of planar matter into the Drift. They defend technology and possess innate abilities to travel between the Drift and the Universe as though they had a non-magical internal Drift engine. The motivations of these beings remain as obscured as the history of the plane, though many point to the deity Triune and her immense metropolis of Alluvion that floats within the Drift.

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ETHEREAL PLANE — PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Transitive Plane
Divinities Alazhra
Native Inhabitants hags, shades (terrorized), twinsouls

The Ethereal Plane, or Space Between Spaces, is a vast, misty realm overlapping each of the Inner Planes. Formed by the interacting tidal forces of creation and destruction from Creation's Forge and the Void, this plane swirls with currents and eddies of fog, lit only by erratic pulses of soft green luminescence and dim light from the planes it overlays, visible but ever intangible. Mortals once primarily used this plane as a means of short-distance transit, whether it be bypassing barriers or escaping through an unseen realm. Thought to be a realm of ghosts and spirits, the Ethereal Plane is also home to unknowable dangers that dwell within the realm's protomatter mists.

More technologically advanced inhabitants of the Universe use the Space Between Spaces as a site for esoteric media creation. So-called "ghost hunters" use magical spells or equipment to traverse the border between the Universe and Astral Plane to confront spirits or haunting forces tied to this realm, often recording their endeavors for use as media upon their return. The predators of the Ethereal Plane haven't taken kindly to the monetization of their space, and many have begun following intruders back to their realms of origin by developing plane-splitting abilities.

A portion of the galaxy of Desna's Spiral is home to a planar convergence with the Ethereal Plane known as Pharasma's Coil. The phenomenon appears like a second spiral expanding within the galaxy, but visible only to those looking for the metaphysical signs of the Space Between Spaces. Worlds within this section have thin barriers with the Ethereal Plane, allowing ease of entry between the planes through specialized magitech devices closely guarded by the Church of Pharasma.

FIRST WORLD — PLANE

ERRATIC | METAMORPHIC

Category Transitive Plane
Divinities the Eldest
Native Inhabitants fey, Iinnorms

The First World was a first draft of the Universe, crafted by divinities to test their metaphorical materials. A realm of extremes–bestial, primal, and beautiful–with colors and sensations brighter and more intense than the mundane world created after it, the First World is populated by fey and the divine entities known as the Eldest. Mirroring mercurial fey whimsy, the First World's laws of nature constantly and unpredictably change. Distance and time are wildly inconsistent, such that mortal travelers might spend an hour or a day within the First World, only to find a century or only a few seconds passed once they return to their own plane.

While many would consider the First World a primal paradise, this plane has seen a technological renaissance akin to those of the Pact Worlds since well into or before the Gap. Where once fey acted as proverbial (sometimes literal) "bogeymen" entering the Universe to whisk away mortals, they now take advantage of their plane's many gates to the mortal realm to abscond with new technology or adopt new fashion and media trends to bring back with them.

THE NETHERWORLD — PLANE

SHADOW

Category Transitive Plane
Divinities Lao Shu Po, velstrac demagogues, Zon-Shelyn
Native Inhabitants calignis, d'ziriaks, ixcaliads, kayals (fetchlings), shades (the mutilated), velstracs

A murky, distorted, and imperfect mirror of the Universe, the Netherworld overlaps the Universe and serves as a buffer or conduit between it and the Void. The Netherworld exists in a state of perpetually dim half-light, the landscape containing similar features to the overlapping Universe, but in warped or twisted fashions. Settlements in the Universe might exist in the Netherworld, sometimes in ruins and sometimes as terrible, frightening replicas. This applies to whole planets, though some worlds simply lack a counterpart in the Netherworld beyond a barren and lifeless rock.

Sometime during the Gap, it's known that servants of Zon-Kuthon operated interstellar ships using *shadow drives*, a type of engine that allowed travel into the Netherworld in a means similar to how Drift engines operate with the Drift. Such engines remain in use today, though the plane sees much less traffic with Drift travel being less horrific on travelers.

The shadow natives known as kayals are humans who have adapted to the Netherworld's cruel environment over countless generations. The fiendish velstracs long ago fled Hell and established themselves in the Netherworld. They've had a crisis of faith following the amalgamation of Shelyn and Zon-Kuthon into Zon-Shelyn, and they hope to solve their quandary of whom to serve through greater mutilations upon hapless flesh.

OUTER SPHERE PLANES

The planes of the Outer Sphere are the manifest realms of philosophy: good and evil, order and change, faith, and their admixtures, populated by celestials, fiends, monitors, and others who promote these moral concepts. These planes are the backdrop upon which the mortal afterlife reaches its apparent conclusion, and the end destination of the River of Souls. The Outer Planes are regions of stability adrift in the raw, chaotic quintessence of the primordial Maelstrom, its tides forever gnawing at their edges even as mortal souls sustain them. The Outer Rifts manifest as cracks in the Outer Sphere's fabric. Rising from the metropolitan Axis is the Boneyard's spire, the location where mortal souls are judged and then sent to their final destinations, be they reward, suffering, or oblivion. The Outer Planes are places of majesty, wonder, terror, and danger outstripping anything mortal adventurers might encounter anywhere else.

ABADDON — PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities daemon harbingers, Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Urgathoa
Native Inhabitants daemons, shades (the hunted)

The wastelands of Abaddon are a nightmare vista of toxic fog and half-light where desperate shades attempt to hide from the depredations of the daemons who seek to obliterate their souls. Abaddon's perpetual eclipse might be nothing less than the lidded, comatose eye of the Bound Prince, the First Horseman, betrayed and cast down by the Four, forgotten by the cosmos at large, but far too powerful for them to destroy—waiting, watching, and hungering.

As the physical embodiment of death, the daemons exist in a state of constant predatory conflict, only granting their service to the plane's leaders, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Death, Famine, Pestilence, and War. Settlements are rare and far between, with most specializing in the soul trade or the sale of items designed for differing types of murder, ranging from single targets to mass extinction events.

Of all the deific powers to change during the events of the Gap, few were as affected as the ranks of the daemonic harbingers. These demigod daemons typically swear fealty to one of the Horsemen, but some remain independent and try to establish broad power bases long enough to seize power. Rising harbingers, like Firjadah the Twisted Screen Name or Batwahr the Creeping Fallout, establish themselves as personifications of death related to modern innovations. Of the older harbingers, the Prince of the Wracked, Roqorolos, once served Apollyon but has since disappeared and turned his attention to the mortal Universe. This harbinger of fouled water has brought with him the rivers of Styx, which he's used to establish a foothold in a region of space in the Vast.

The Pallid Princess, Urgathoa, maintains her divine domain within Abaddon. Here, she protects the shades who seek their afterlife in her service while also courting powerful undead who seek her direct counsel.

AXIS — PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Abadar, Lissala, primal monitors
Native Inhabitants aeons, shades (remade)

Axis is a realm of pure, absolute order, unhindered by moral concerns. The plane takes the form of a vast, gleaming, perfectly structured city. Built at the base of Pharasma's Spire, the Perfect City is a bulwark against the chaos of the Maelstrom and the Outer Rifts, with vast mechanical armies marching forth to explore, define, and pacify an imperfect, unruly universe. Axis is also home to axiomites: beings composed of living mathematics and equations. Axiomites continue to work on their organization of the cosmos but increasingly turn their attentions to the planar city of Axis itself; as with any city, Axis requires nonstop maintenance and improvement in order to resist the march of time.

Well-defined laws have ensured Axis is a hub for travelers from across the cosmos. One of the largest branch sites for AbadarCorp rests near the actual domain of the deity Abadar. The domain of Lissala has expanded to create a Rune Sector, a portion of Axis that acts as Lissala's domain and a meeting point for celestials, fiends, and countless other planar inhabitants looking to negotiate terms with a supposedly neutral arbiter.

BONEYARD — PLANE

TIMELESS

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Groetus, Pharasma, psychopomp ushers
Native Inhabitants psychopomps, shades (the dead)

The Boneyard spans an impossibly tall and ever-growing spire of gleaming quintessence that rises up into the silver void of the Astral Plane. As the destination of the River of Souls, the Boneyard is where the souls of the mortal dead arrive for judgment and for Pharasma and her psychopomp servitors to direct them to their respective afterlives. Pharasma's domain is separated into eight courts, each corresponding to one of the other planes of the Outer Sphere and collecting the souls due to that plane. Not every soul goes unchallenged, and proxies of gods and planes argue and debate over souls, with final arbitration conducted by Pharasma herself.

Demigod psychopomp ushers serve Pharasma, many expediting the passing of mortals affiliated with specific planets. Conflicts in the Universe exacerbate the Boneyard's structure, with Arthalan First of the Last shepherding the inhabitants of the Azlanti Star Empire, while Vrasilon War's End acts as the usher for loyal servants of the Veskarium. Both psychopomp ushers maintain cordial relations despite the workload their mortal charges impart upon them with the burgeoning war.

The great moon-deity of Groetus looms above the Boneyard, a herald of the end of times. His orbit has decayed much since the Gap, with the moon nearing completion of an apocalyptic collision with Pharasma's Spire itself.

Pharasma's courts and the surrounding Graveyard of Souls aren't the only features atop the spire. Beyond the graveyard, the Spirelands manifest environments much like those of the varied worlds of the Universe, filled with the souls of neutral shades who have nowhere else to go, for they are unclaimed by any gods and did nothing in life to suggest any particular ethos. Pilgrims of the philosophy known as the Prophecies of Kalistrade wander these lands, hiding from psychopomps and other creatures while investigating some mysterious agenda within the Spirelands.

ELYSIUM — PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Desna, elven pantheon, empyreal lords
Native Inhabitants azatas, shades (the chosen)

Verdant, wild, and unrestrained by order, where passion and creation are fostered and rewarded, the plane of Elysium is a place of wild, idealized natural beauty. The so-called Promised Land and its inhabitants represent a wide variety of freely given benevolence, often willing to directly aid visitors but more often serving as inspirations and muses to foster positive change and self-realized success. Elysium's shades, known as the chosen, appear as idealized versions of their mortal selves, each pursuing their own self-determined actions and finding their unique paths to join the ranks of the plane's celestials.

Azatas organize into fleeting, competitive courts, each rewarding heroism and creativity above all else. The Sovyrian elven pantheon and Desna's personal demiplane, Cynosure, reside within Elysium. To be closer to their gods, some elven

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planar explorers established the settlement of Refuge as a bastion for creative freedom.

HEAVEN PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Dwarven pantheon, empyreal lords, Iomedae
Native Inhabitants archons, shades (the elect)

The great mountain of Heaven is the realm of structured benevolence made manifest. Organized into seven tiers, the mountain's solid appearance is actually malleable, making way for a vast assemblage of varied environments to accommodate both its own celestials and the souls who migrate there. Devoted to defending the innocent and crusading against the wicked, Heaven's archons marshal into vast armies, commanded by their empyreal lords. Angels collaborate with the archon legions but typically act in more direct service to Heaven's resident deities, with Iomedae the most prominent among them.

Of all the planes, Heaven is perhaps the most skeptical of the technological advancements made by mortals, for knowledge is power, and power corrupts. Resident archons jealously guard and employ technology but leave it out of the hands of Heaven's shades, known as the elect. These shades manifest at the mountain's base, and their subsequent climb up the seemingly endless, unreachable heights is both a literal and figurative journey that they must make without technological assistance.

The settlement of Heaven's Shore is a trader's paradise open to visitors with good intent. However, the area still specializes mostly in magical equipment and only provides the most basic technological equipment, with strict archons guarding advanced gear on higher layers.

HELL PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities archdevils, Asmodeus, infernal dukes, queens of the night
Native Inhabitants devils, hell hounds, shades (the damned)

Hell is the realm of devils, the multiversal seat of tyranny and malignant laws, and the divine domain of Asmodeus, the Prince of Darkness. Here, every act is authorized, calculated, recorded, and set like perfectly ordered clockwork within a vast machine driven on methodical suffering and greased with pain and purification. The nine inverted layers of Hell violently oppose the surrounding fabric of the Maelstrom, each layer shaped to reflect the nature of its ruling archdevil. Avernus's paved volcanic wastes, ruled by Barbatos, are the marshaling place of Hell's armies and hold the enormous construction yards dedicated to crafting fiendish starships. Dispater's layer of Dis is a great iron metropolis of brutal efficiency where goods manufactured in Avernus are distributed. The layer of Erebus is an expansive sewer system for Dis and contains the magitech vaults and treasuries of Hell, ruled by Mammon, a fiend thought to have ascended to a purely digital form along with the evolution of mortal currencies. Ruled by Belial, the layer of Phlegethon hosts Hell's greater forges that equip the vast armies with magical and technological equipment. Geryon's watery realm of Stygia houses Hell's countless data servers and digital libraries. Moloch's smoldering, ash-draped

factories of Malebolge are the training site for the infernal armies, and Baalzebul's frozen layer of Cocytus torments the imprisoned damned in a massive, eternal battle royale. Post-Gap evidence suggests the existence of a supposed tenth layer of Hell, but such references have been mostly scrubbed by the galactic mind wipe.

MAELSTROM — PLANE

METAMORPHIC

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Besmara, orc pantheon, protean lords
Native Inhabitants proteans, shades (the shapeless)

The Maelstrom, infinite and ancient, spawned the other Outer Planes in cosmological prehistory and surrounds them like a vast metaphorical—and at times literal—ocean of raw, seething quintessence. Where the Maelstrom borders these other planes, its structure takes on their characteristics, albeit in an unpredictable, chaotic fashion. Beyond these so-called Borderlands, however, the Maelstrom reverts to its true nature, the Cerulean Void: a trackless, liquid infinity devoid of stability and permanence where serpentine proteans create and destroy with profound frivolity. The proteans are paradoxically organized into discrete choruses, each with its own philosophy and goals in service to the Maelstrom.

Pre-Drift travel, Besmara crafted the first *chaos sails* that allowed starships to cruise the Maelstrom and achieve faster-than-light travel. The greatest port of call in the Cerulean Void is Galisemni, an immense metropolis that drifts through the chaos and attracts traders and visitors from across the cosmos.

NIRVANA — PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities Empyreal lords, Sarenrae, Zon-Shelyn
Native Inhabitants angels, shades (the cleansed)

Nirvana is the realm of purest benevolence, a pastoral paradise that promises sanctuary to the weary and enlightenment and transcendence to those who seek it out. Filled with beautiful wilderness of all types in perfect harmony with its occupants, Nirvana's wilds are home to angels and others. The plane's shades, known as the cleansed, most often take the forms of glorified, sapient wild animals, though many eventually leave their carefree existence to aid others, ascending to assist the benevolent works of angels. Devoted to guiding and assisting mortals, angels are often charged with delivering important messages that reflect the will of benevolent deities.

While a manifest paradise, Nirvana's luminous perfection has seen a recent change with the addition of a relatively small section of land that's cast in eternal night. This region of rolling hills and forests is lit by stars of unknown origin and is somehow tied to the Netherworld, acting as the realm of Zon-Shelyn.

OUTER RIFTS — PLANE

Category Outer Plane
Divinities demon lords, Droskar, Lamashtu, nascent demon lords
Native Inhabitants demons, shades (larvae)

The Outer Rifts are realms full of horror and destruction fueled by mortal sin. Each of its innumerable regions is a unique iteration of malice and misery, each with its own terrible and twisted environment, with one driving maxim: the strong survive, while the weak suffer and are destroyed. Ruled by demons, the Outer Rifts and its native beings seek only to ruin and destroy. Though demons routinely rampage out into other planes when the Outer Rifts manifests a great planar rift, the denizens of the Outer Rifts are fractured and self-destructive. Demon lords such as Pazuzu, Shivaska, and Zura fight for dominion over the Outer Rifts as much or more than they threaten the other planes.

In this modern era, many realms have developed within the Outer Rifts related to the technological advancements of the Universe. The partly digitized Dark Lobby is a brutal realm of corridors and semi-digital fiends managed by the demon lord of games, Icarthian. Vast offices and data storage centers house legions of larvae shades chained to desks and forced to stare at unintelligible monitors, all at the behest of Ksedahl, the demon lord of ceaseless employment.

DIMENSIONS

Existing in the metaphorical space between the Transitive Planes and smaller, finite demiplanes, dimensions are a category unto themselves, defying the neat categorization of planar scholars and adventurers. Seemingly infinite in scale, not necessarily spatial in the same way as a plane, and overlaying every other plane at once—including one another—dimensions and planes are most significantly differentiated in how each of them breaks the commonly held rules of the other.

AKASHIC RECORD — DIMENSION

STATIC

Category demiplane
Divinities archivists
Native Inhabitants Akashic dragons, recorders

The supernatural repository of all knowledge in the multiverse lies deep within the Astral Plane, completely unreachable except through esoteric techniques known to a few dimensional travelers. An island in a silver sea, this dimension appears to be a grand library, monumental cathedral, or opaline palace, depending on who's looking. The archive's contents appear fluid, simultaneously as vast metal rows of computer servers, stacks of dusty tomes, and constellations of crystals suspended midair.

DIMENSION OF TIME — DIMENSION

ERRATIC STATIC

Category dimension
Divinities unknown
Native Inhabitants shades (the unbound)

The Dimension of Time is a swirling storm of blurred images, the composite of millions of interwoven timelines around their own, with a single doorway allowing access to one's own past. Travelers appear as transparent images of themselves, but the plane seems averse to any attempt to alter the past, no matter the means or the intention. Such attempts often end in the offending individual being erased from existence or trapped within closed time loops to limit the damage they inflict upon the overall flow of time.

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SPECIES

Just as there are countless stars throughout the universe, innumerable species coexist on the worlds orbiting them. Also called ancestries, species sometimes appear in multiple star systems or are tethered to just a single world. While many have a humanoid appearance, others have adapted into a variety of different forms and characteristics!



Android



Barathu



Human

PACT WORLDS SPECIES

As the core of the Starfinder setting, the species of the Pact Worlds often receive a broad spotlight in the setting. Each of the ancestries included in *Starfinder Player Core* are a major species within the Pact Worlds, except for skittermanders and vesk who, while critical to the setting, are more often associated with the Veskarium where both species originated. The species described here aren't the only ones living in the Pact Worlds but represent the most common or notable species that might be encountered there.

Android

Androids are everywhere in the Pact Worlds and throughout the broader cosmos, with different variants existing on hundreds (if not more) worlds. Most androids resemble humans with visible circuitry in their skin or prominent mechanical parts. Creation crèches on Aballon and in the Diaspora were known to have manufactured millions of androids during their operation, though several other types of androids have come from outside the Pact Worlds. One notable type is the more ancient android chassis, believed to originate from a hidden world called Androffa.

Barathu

Barathus are floating, blimp-like creatures from the vast gas giant of Bretheda. They govern Bretheda and several of its surrounding moons as well as the nearby gas giant Liavara. Predisposed to editing their own genetic code and even synthesizing chemicals within their bodies, barathus are capable of innate flight and can adapt to thrive in challenging conditions. A subset of barathus, known as the Dreamers, ceaselessly wander the natural preserves of Liavara. The Dreamers floated in a tranquil dream until the Newborn unleashed a waking nightmare upon them.

Human

Survivors of their original home world Lost Golarion, humans live on every Pact World and beyond. In bygone eras, some groups of humans established colonies in distant star systems, with none perhaps more notable than the Azlanti Star Empire, a vast interstellar regime founded by the heirs of a human regime that departed Lost Golarion in ages long before the Gap. Humanity's ability to adapt in harsh environments has led to their prominence in the modern age. Some humans still trace their roots back to ethnicities and family lines that existed on Lost Golarion, and their ancestral cultures are commonly honored together by groups such as the Knights of Golarion, who hope to preserve the vanished world's history and traditions.

Kasatha

Kasathas are a four-armed species from the distant world Kasath. Kasathas have a strong presence in the Pact Worlds thanks to their generational worldship, the *Idari*. The ruling elders known as the Doyenate were originally intent on

settling the world of Akiton, but when the *Idari* arrived and discovered the planet already inhabited, they stopped their colonization efforts. Generations later, many kasathas have integrated into Pact Worlds society by emigrating onto other planets or staying to help maintain the *Idari* and its biomes. Some kasathas choose to explore the wider cosmos, often as part of a ritual known as the Tempering, which the Doyenate hope will contribute to the wider mission of discovering a new uniting goal for their species, and perhaps a new destination for their worldship.

Lashunta

Lashuntas are a dimorphic species known for their telepathy and pheromones that range from pleasant to disturbing, depending on who you ask. Hailing from the world of Castrovel, lashuntas traditionally split themselves into two distinct heritages: damaya and korasha. Damayas are pushed into leadership roles or trained as entertainers or scholars, and they appear delicate and lithe compared to stocky, muscular korashas who are recruited for the military, competitive sports, and roles that involve physical labor. Lashuntas who choose not to become damaya or korasha display unpredictable genetic traits and might appear to be a mix of the two heritages or have more unusual features.

Pahtra

Pahtras are a felinoid species from Pulonis, the newest planet to join the Pact Worlds alliance after reclaiming their independence from the Veskarium. Pahtras are born with a variety of fur types, colors, and patterns depending on their heritage (or simply at their ancestral god Meyel's whim). With their home world as the only recognized Pact World outside of the Pact System, the largest population of pahtras remains physically distant from their Pact Worlds allies, but the long history of occupation by the Veskarium has led to many pahtra families living elsewhere in the galaxy. Some members of the pahtra diaspora have opted to return to Pulonis or have taken to acting as representatives of the newest Pact World on whatever home they'd inhabited before the liberation.

Shirren

Shirrens' ancestors escaped the Swarm, a vicious invading horde of insectile monsters linked by a merciless hive mind. After mutating free will that enabled them to resist the hive mind and break away, they arrived in the Pact Worlds with warning of the Swarm's impending attack. The insectile shirrens' shocking arrival and the vital intelligence they brought with them prevented the Pact Worlds and Veskarium alliance from being defeated by the Swarm. Today, shirrens enjoy their newfound independence by sampling new experiences and personal choices like fine wine. Most shirrens form family groups of three, including a male-female pair and a genderless host who helps with reproduction and child rearing. Shirrens live everywhere, but few stay in one place for long, save for an enclave on Verces and several smaller settlements on other worlds.

Ysoki

Ysoki families playfully bicker with other clans about their ancestral home world, and even pre-Gap history is muddled on whether the first ysoki originated from Akiton or Lost Golarion. Also referred to as "ratfolk" by some (a term ysoki have adopted), this species can be found everywhere. From single adventurous explorers to entire familial hordes, ysoki eagerly settle down in the nooks and crannies of settlements or on board starships. Cramped environments appeal to their nature, so many ysoki find work as technicians or guides in alien environments. Within the Pact Worlds, ysoki populations are numerous all across Akiton and on board Absalom Station. Ysoki families spread out on every world, leading to the perception that many ysoki have a cousin or auntie in every port of call and backwater station.



Kasatha



Lashunta



Pahtra

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Shirren



Ysoki



Dragonkin

OTHER PACT WORLDS SPECIES

Beyond those presented in *Player Core*, there are other species present within the Pact Worlds. Some of these species might be more numerous than others, including core ancestries, but might not have as strong a connection with exploration or aren't the focus of as many stories within the setting.

Ancient Species

All the ancestries found in *Pathfinder Player Core* still exist within the Pact Worlds in some form. Dwarves maintain a strong presence in the Diaspora where they mine valuable asteroids and dwell in high-tech fortresses. Dwarven clans can also be found in other star systems piloting their vast Star Citadel mobile bases. Most elves are secluded on the continent Sovyrian on their home world of Castrovel where their elders try to maintain a policy of self-isolation that's at odds with the will of younger elves. Gnomes, halflings, and leshies each have small enclaves spread across the Pact Worlds, and many operate independently away from others of their kind. Orcs were a species hit hard by the Gap, and their numbers have become minuscule compared to prior to the event. Many modern orcs believe that most of their ancestors were taken by Torag on whatever fate befell Lost Golarion and that if they prove themselves, they might be elevated to join whatever great conflict their kin were taken to.

Astrazoan

Thought to have originated from inside Apostae, shape-changing astrazoans are a mystery to everyone, including themselves. Most astrazoans hide in plain sight by blending in as mundane members of their community, hiding their true identities and creating new personalities for each "skin," or shape they wear. Rarely, astrazoans flaunt their aberrant true form or even exploit their bizarre talents as assassins, escorts, or spies. Astrazoans mysteriously appeared as a species with no records of their origins and history, and many feel a burning desire to delve the dungeon planet inside Apostae in hopes of uncovering more. Read more about astrazoans in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.

Contemplative

Intellectual contemplatives survived in underground sanctuaries on Akiton, where they focused on mental pursuits for so long their bodies atrophied and they became little more than floating brains. Now charged with potent psychic potential, contemplatives tend to dedicate themselves to activities they can enjoy in isolation, like development or research. Adventurous contemplatives might become advisors to less erudite companions. Read more about contemplatives in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.

Dragonkin

Large-sized draconic humanoids, dragonkin are a species native to Triaxus, the wandering planet. Every dragonkin can form a deep supernatural connection with another person. Partner bonds traditionally form between dragonkin and ryphorians, but any sapient species can enter the bond. Dragonkin and the partner bond are pillars of the legendary Skyfire Legion. Read more about dragonkin in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.

Kalo

Kalos evolved on the watery moon of Kalo-Mahoi that orbits Bretheda. After breaking free from linnorm oppressors, they built exquisite cities full of art and industry. Kalos infuse art and fashion into everything, even the special environmental protections required for them to survive outside of water. Read more about kalo in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.

Sarcesian

Inheritors of the ruined worlds that now form the Diaspora, most sarcesians survive as nomads sailing between crèche worlds on solar wings. They can suspend their respiration to survive in space and have adapted to create a set of wings made of

pure energy while they're within a vacuum. Sarcesians grow up inside a bubble, then launch into space, where most find adventure, peace, or work in the Pact System's asteroid belt. Read more about sarcesians in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.

SRO

Sentient Robotic Organism, or SRO, is a term that refers to almost all types of sentient robots within the Pact Worlds. Independent from semi-organic androids and the soulless anacites of Aballon, SROs represent a wide array of different technological beings created by corporations, scientists, or even artificial gods. SROs all have full rights within the Pact Worlds and have souls that will one day be judged by Pharasma. Read more about SROs in *Starfinder Tech Core*.

Verthani

The first species to construct spacefaring vessels within the Pact Worlds, the verthanis of Verces adapted technology early in their evolution and incorporated it into their traditional caste system for generations. Spindly-limbed humanoids with pure black eyes, all verthanis can change the pigment of their skin to display complex patterns. Verthanis are the main demographic on the technologically advanced world of Verces. Read more about Verthanis in *Starfinder Tech Core*.

OTHER GALACTIC SPECIES

While the galaxy is full of countless other species, a notable few are found commonly in the Pact Worlds and across the Starfinder setting.

Skittermander

A four-armed species with colorful fur, skittermanders are perhaps best known for their desire to "help" whenever they can. Helping is a cultural mandate and evolutionary drive for skittermanders, who evolved on the pastoral world Oeddertchonk. Perhaps no better example exists of this helpful nature than when invaders from the Veskarium came to conquer the skittermander home world, and the skittermanders eagerly assisted their newfound conquerors in the attempt! Today, many skittermanders have migrated to the Pact Worlds (especially onto recently liberated Pulonis), while others still live within the Veskarium, where they handle occupation with a mixture of baffling helpfulness, malicious compliance, and relentless chaos. Regardless of where they live, skittermanders have a reputation for their emotive, helpful natures that might not match every individual's personality.

Vesk

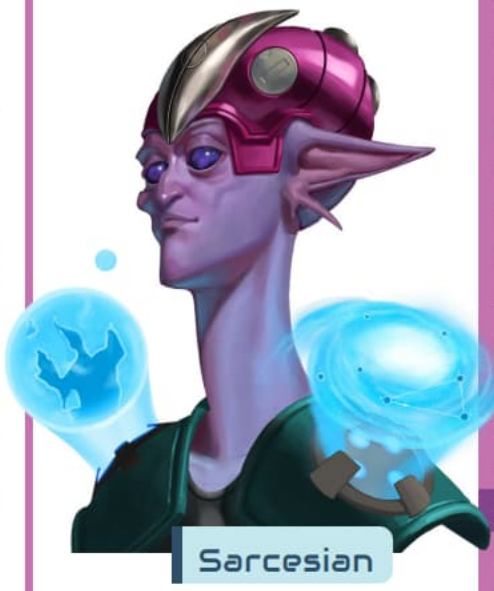
A warlike, scaly ancestry from the Ghavaniska System, the reptilian species of Vesk Prime are the leading species in the mighty Veskarium empire. Onetime enemies of the Pact Worlds during a tense period of conflict called the Silent War, they put aside their differences to fight the Swarm War. Many vesk forged close ties within the Pact Worlds, and some even left the Veskarium to make lives within the Pact System or other Pact Worlds colonies. Vesk are a divided species, with most still loyally serving the Veskarium in their mounting war with the Azlanti Star Empire, while others distance their lives from affiliation with the Veskarium by pursuing different goals in service to other institutions.

Vlaka

Vlakas are a bipedal, wolflike ancestry hailing from the distant world of Lajok, far in the Vast. Living on a desolate world orbiting a dying star, vlakas are a reflective species who seek to control their aggressive impulses and to master their emotions in the face of adversity. Known for wildly varying senses, many vlakas have some combination of deafness and/or blindness, while their senses of touch and smell are keenly honed. Adventurous vlakas departed Lajok in search of ways to reverse the death of their home world's star, but those who remained witnessed a miracle. Read more about vlakas in *Starfinder Galaxy Guide*.



Kalo



Sarcesian



Vesk

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THREATS

The galaxy of Desna's Path is threatened. Some of these menaces are powerful but selfish entities acting alone, while others are groups or entire civilizations that threaten the galaxy's stability. Larger groups aren't monoliths, and many individuals can be negotiated with or might even have cordial relationships with adventurers. Some might just have an opposing viewpoint for a practical reason, such as necessity demanded by biology or control from an outside force.

The following threats have important roles to play in the Starfinder setting, particularly in relation to the Pact Worlds.

AZLANTI STAR EMPIRE

Located in the Vast near the region of space known as the Hydra Nebula, the Azlanti Star Empire is an offshoot of humanity who departed Golarion using magical innovation in eras even before the Gap. Settling on the world of New Thespera, the empire expanded massively following the advent of Drift travel by deploying elite Aeon Guard forces in critical locations and establishing colonies across massive swathes of space. Following a brief encounter with a Starfinder Society explorer, the Azlanti Star Empire's ruling Aeon Throne became aware of the Pact System's location but has yet to launch any forays to their ancestral home or any campaigns to find Lost Golarion. Only recently, a sudden and brutal coup instigated by the high priest of Lissala, Ishmerai Ophir, caused a dramatic shift in power within the empire. The reigning Ixomander twins were deposed, ending in one twin's exile and the other's assassination, and the state church of Lissala assumed regency of the empire to prevent further chaos and establish the next heir to the throne. Under Ishmerai's leadership, the Azlanti Star Empire deployed their new Sihedron Guard fleet to invade Kehtaria, where a fragile peace between Veskarium and Azlanti forces stranded during the Drift Crisis turned into all-out war between the two powers.

CORPORATIONS

Hundreds of major corporations operate within the Pact Worlds, and even more are active in Near Space and the Vast. A few megacorporations like AbadarCorp are powerful enough to have established branches and operations all over the galaxy, but most operate on a smaller scale. Many corporations act as beneficial institutions, while others operate at the fringes of legality. Unethical companies can quickly come into conflict with adventurers or even act as temporary sponsors. Frozen Trove is a Triaxus-based corporation under draconic management, though most of their corporate facilities exist outside the Pact Worlds. Frozen Trove is infamous for performing illegal and unethical experiments in remote locations or even on pre-Drift capable worlds, where they can test their biotech prototypes and study genetically engineered organisms that only exist off-the-record. Broader in scope, azrinaran corporations represent the generational achievements of elven families who escaped Golarion during the Gap and settled on Apostae. Rampant with nepotism and transactions that skirt Pact Worlds legality, azrinaran groups represent some of the most well-known corporations in the Pact Worlds, including Arabani Arms and Zeizerer Munitions.

CORPSE FLEET

Following the signing of the Pact and the formation of the Pact Worlds, many powerful undead on Eox disagreed with their leaders' decision to join a federation that would put them on equal footing with the living species of their system. Following the leadership of decorated officer Undying Admiral Shathrava, the Corpse Fleet broke away from Eoxian society and escaped into the Vast. Having spent centuries building their power base, the Corpse Fleet is now an undead civilization unto itself, with strongholds spread throughout the Vast and even into the entropic plane of the Void. Loyal Corpse Fleet privateers believe in the supremacy of undeath over the living, who they believe are useful only as fodder for future undead. Shathrava's goal is unifying all undead privateer fleets into a force large enough to bring the Pact Worlds' fleets to heel and establish undead supremacy within the Pact System by seizing the *Starstone*.

CULT OF THE DEVOURER

A force of nature as much as a religion, the servants of the Devourer act impulsively to spread chaos and destruction across the galaxy. People who pledge to serve the god of cosmic annihilation are often sadistic cannibals and berserkers who dedicate themselves to honoring their patron through acts of mass destruction and violence. Such groups rarely maintain cohesion. Leaders quickly emerge to enact a bloody agenda before burning themselves out (sometimes literally). The only consistent threat from the Devourer's unstable cult are atrocites—monsters who escaped Pharasma's judgment to continually serve the Devourer as agents of oblivion. Atrocites are often summoned by cultists desiring maximum carnage.

FIRST ONES

This mysterious precursor species established outposts on a handful of worlds and then disappeared without any indication of where they went. The forlorn remnants of their

civilization remain, including their abandoned progeny, the robotic anacites of Aballon. In their creators' absence, many anacites strive to become modern incarnations of the First Ones or seek reconnection with their lost progenitors. Recent discoveries by the Starfinder Society and other organizations have hinted at a wider First Ones presence throughout the cosmos, including discoveries of ruins within the Pact System's sun as well as orbiting the sun of the vlaka home world of Lajok. The First Ones returned to the modern galactic stage with the sudden arrival of a mysterious starship into the Pact System followed by its partially controlled crash onto the surface of Akiton. Known as the Wreck of the Returned, this vessel bears many similarities to the mysterious technology of the First Ones and has unleashed defenses well beyond the Pact Worlds' understanding of magic and technology. Was the vessel a gift, or a weapon?

GIDERON AUTHORITY

Sometime during the Gap, it's believed that a great civilization existed in Near Space, founded by goblinoid colonists who left the Pact System long ago. Following the Gap, this empire had fallen and was replaced by two major powers: the Marixah Republic and the Gideron Authority. Whereas the Marixah Republic is a democratic civilization with strong ties to the Pact Worlds, the Gideron Authority is an authoritarian military regime with delusions of reclaiming the glory of the empire both sides have no recollection of. Though smaller in size compared to the relative giants of the Azlanti Empire and the Veskarium, the Gideron Authority and its mighty platoons of goblin troops have their eye on surrounding territories and don't seem likely to stop expanding anytime soon.

INSATIABLE ECLIPSE

The birth of the Newborn in the Pact Worlds called forth a terror from Eox's distant past. The remorseless undead entity known as the Insatiable Eclipse has since begun to reclaim its own domain on the grave world. Eox's ruling bone sages have done their best to silence news of the harrowing destruction of Murthal, the ancient necropolis above the Veiled Tomb. The Insatiable Eclipse won't be sated until it drinks the life force of all living creatures. Its crazed followers seek the peace they believe will follow the extinction of all life.

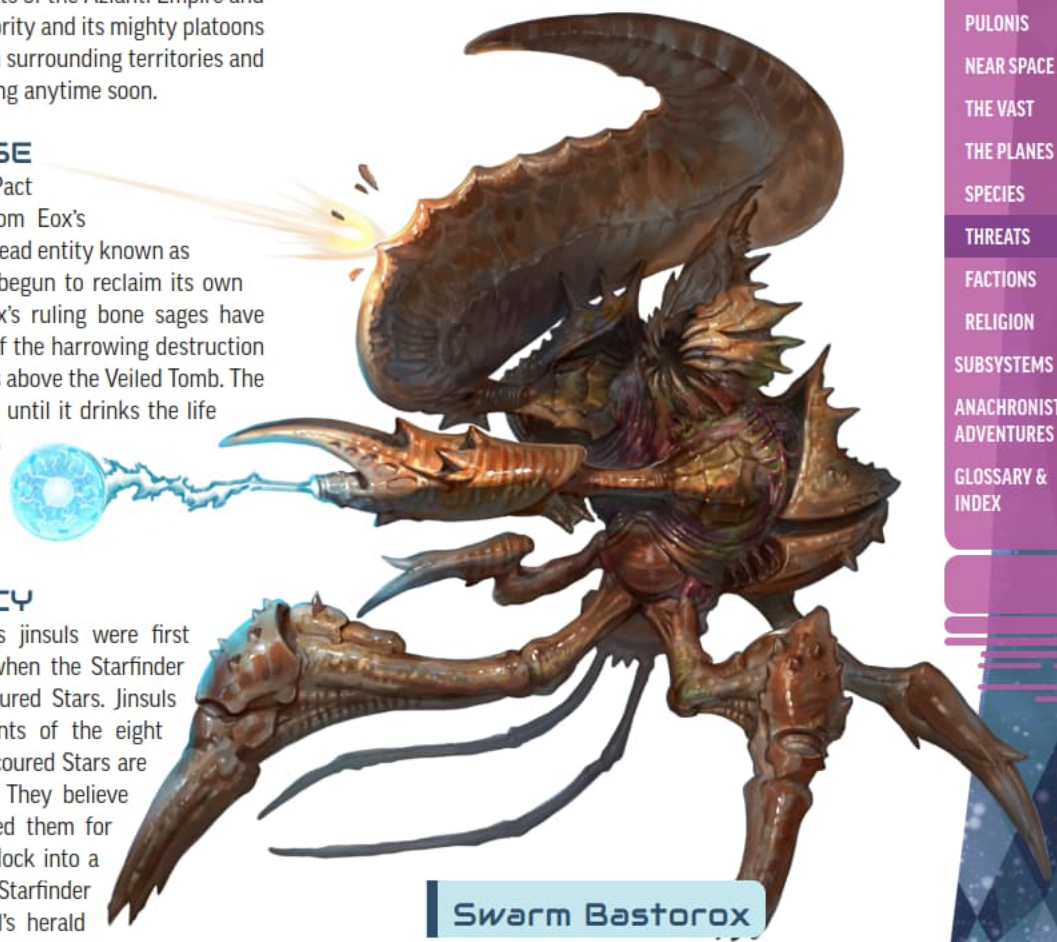
JINSUL HIEROCRACY

The chitinous species known as jinsuls were first encountered by Pact Worlders when the Starfinder Society began exploring the Scoured Stars. Jinsuls believe that only the descendants of the eight civilizations originally from the Scoured Stars are worthy to exist in the universe. They believe the waking deity Kadrical created them for the purpose of shepherding his flock into a new age—and purging the wolves. Starfinder Society agents defeated Kadrical's herald in a climactic showdown that broke the jinsuls' resolve and scattered them throughout the Vast. Now led by errant hierarchs, jinsul fleets prey on trade lanes and attack settlements in Near Space and the Vast, following an inscrutable agenda. Hierarch Jurastroon commands the largest contingent of jinsul warriors from their mobile fortress world of Otorak.

SWARM

With numbers beyond measure, the monstrous, insectile Swarm is perhaps the greatest threat to the stability of the galaxy thus far discovered. United by a ferocious hive mind, the Swarm devours worlds and adapts. The threat of just even a single colony brought the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium together as a unified force, though the colony's defeat came at a high cost. Since a colony was defeated in the Swarm War, the greater Swarm has avoided Near Space and begun eating a path through the Vast.

The relatively recent discovery of Swarm life-forms on Krethiskar within Near Space let loose a previously dormant colony. The Krethiskar colony has since expanded rapidly into Near Space, attacking the worlds of the Szandite Collective without mercy. The Krethiskar Swarm is rumored to be commanded by a mutated shirren with a familiar face. Krethiskar Swarm components have a different appearance and composition than those of the true Swarm, but this deviant lineage has thus far proven just as tenacious as the limitless hordes of Swarm lurking in the Vast.



Swarm Bastorox

FACTIONS

Factions in the galaxy are corporations, federations, and organizations united by mutual goals. Factions control vast resources and claim the loyalty of hundreds or thousands of people across the galaxy. Some factions wield political clout, claim historical significance, command armies, or gain power from ties to otherworldly beings.

The factions summarized here represent organizations with strong ties to the Pact Worlds that can also be found across the galaxy. Some of these institutions, such as the **Free Captains** and **Xenowardens**, represent groups that actively impact adventurers across the cosmos, whether it be contending with piracy or negotiating with planetary conservationists. Many factions work with interstellar governments, such as the **Knights of Golarion** and **Starfinder Society**, which both have deep ties to the Pact Worlds and stalwartly continue their quest to rediscover Lost Golarion. Other factions, like **AbadarCorp** and the **Hellknights** were founded within the Pact Worlds but have since expanded far beyond the borders of the Golarion System and into the wider cosmos.

ABADARCORP

Perhaps one of the most pervasive brand names in the Pact Worlds and Near Space, AbadarCorp is a mighty business conglomerate that produces almost any type of goods imaginable. It's the wealthiest corporation in the Pact Worlds and all of currently charted space, largely thanks to their standardized credit being accepted in almost every region (even parts of the typically hostile Azlanti Star Empire). They employ millions across the galaxy, either as AbadarCorp agents clad in their iconic armored suits or through numerous subsidiary corps.

While not every member of the corporation shares the company's religious beliefs, the highest-ranked executives and leadership all have strong faith in Abadar, the god of commerce. The current archdirector is the highest-ranking servant of Abadar in the Universe, meaning that there's little separation of church and corporation—most such distinctions only apply for taxation rules.

Outside the Golarion System, AbadarCorp's most notable endeavor is the establishment of several seed colonies throughout Near Space and the Vast. The company expends billions of credits to construct necessary components for these new settlements, often at reasonable prices with stipulations that AbadarCorp be provided finder fees or licensing arrangements for any discoveries made.

FREE CAPTAINS

A loose association of pirates that first united in the Pact Worlds, the Free Captains have spread throughout Near Space and even into the Vast. With humble beginnings in the Diaspora as a confederation of pirate captains, the Free Captains have become the greatest threat to traders and tourists traveling the new Drift Lanes. Taking their name from a historical pirate armada on Lost Golarion, the Free Captains' fleets have pilfered and raided ships since the earliest days of Drift travel, and don't seem likely to stop anytime soon.

The recent creation of Drift Lanes created a brave new era for piracy. Now that stable shortcuts connect major trade hubs, Free Captain crews find it easier than ever to pillage and plunder. Many are fond of a new tactic that involves setting up ambush points on less-traveled portions of key trade routes. But as Free Captain crews grow more brazen, other organizations such as the Hellknights and Stewards are escalating their counter-piracy operations. Whether the Free Captains will rule the Drift like their namesakes ruled the high seas of old, or if Broken Rock will fall to a great police raid remains to be seen.

HELLKNIGHTS

Descended from the group of the same name from Lost Golarion, the Hellknight orders are dedicated to spreading throughout the stars, regardless of any casualties or perceived expense. Allied with fiendish forces from Hell itself, Hellknights offer their service for credits but also impose their specific brand of justice in situations that their leadership deems necessary.

Countless orders comprise the wider faction of Hellknights. The most prominent in the modern age is the Order of the Eclipse, which came to prominence as disenfranchised Hellknights united in the aftermath of the Gap. The Order of the Eclipse focuses its efforts on controlling messaging and dangerous media throughout the Pact Worlds. Hellknights of the Crucible constantly test themselves and scrutinize distant colonies and alien civilizations for brutal trials. Those who pass these tests receive impressive boons for their efforts, such as the bequeathment of *Helldrive* technology, which the Gideron Authority obtained from their ongoing relationship with the Crucible Hellknights. Civilizations that fail eventually face invasion by a more successful empire and their hired Hellknight mercenaries.

KNIGHTS OF GOLARION

Following the Gap, a group of artisans, knights, and historians banded together on Absalom Station with the goal of discovering Lost Golarion's location.

Splitting into fleets, the self-proclaimed Knights of Golarion traveled the stars looking for their lost home world and performing deeds of kindness and valor along the way. Knights of Golarion are dedicated to preserving cultural touchstones from Lost Golarion while battling against forces spreading cruelty and destruction in remote parts of space. It was a fleet of Knights of Golarion who clashed with the Veskarium during the commencement of hostility between the Pact Worlds and the Veskarium, kicking off a wider conflict known as the Battle of Aledra. Later, the Knights valiantly protected Veskarium settlements when the vicious Swarm first invaded, and fought alongside their former foes to protect all of Near Space in the Swarm War. The Knights' shining cathedral ships can be found in almost any region of space. The core knighthood fleets protect the Pact Worlds and errantry fleets patrol far into the Vast. The Knights eagerly work alongside other organizations, including corporations like AbadarCorp and institutions like the Starfinder Society and the Stewards. Their most contentious foes include the Corpse Fleet, the Azlanti Star Empire, invading fiends, jinsul raiders, and the endless forces of the Swarm.



STARFINDER SOCIETY

The galaxy's most adventurous organization started as a tight-knit community that helped their neighbors survive the chaos on Absalom Station following the Gap. In 10 AG, the first members of the Starfinder Society Forum were elected and began funding expeditions. Since then, the Starfinder Society has been at the forefront of galactic exploration. Field agents form adventuring parties that take on missions into Near Space and the Vast to uncover the secrets of lost civilizations or discover magical and technological innovations from alien cultures. An elected First Seeker leads the Society, dedicating years of the Society's efforts to a specific goal, before stepping down and allowing a new Starfinder to take the helm.

Over the years, the Society has endured several notable setbacks. First, the Stardust Plague turned popular opinion against exploring distant space, as fears mounted about what diseases or malign forces could be unleashed. First Seeker Lanrah's tenure ended with her disastrous attempt to discover the truth behind the Gap, causing her death and a complete restructuring within the Society, plus a rule against future First Seekers from exploring the cause of the Gap. Later events like the Scoured Stars incident and Data Scourge decimated the Society's resources, but the tenacious organization always bounces back.



XENOWARDENS

A conservation society originally from Castrovel, Xenowardens are druids, mystics, and scientists working together to preserve nature on a galactic scale. Their mission is protecting ecosystems all over the galaxy from industrialization and exploitation. The Xenowardens also work to repair ecological damage caused by interstellar incidents, such as reseeding worlds and regions devastated by conflicts like the Swarm War. Wildfire Xenowardens eradicate dangerous invasive species and quarantine ecological contagions, often employing harsher methods than other branches.

Xenowardens create and nurture living starships created with secret primal magical rituals. Arkships are plantlike armed transports that bond with a Xenowarden crew. The Greenspeaker, leader of the Xenowardens, always bonds to *Equilibrium*, the largest of the arkships and the most impressive weapon in the faction's arsenal.

OTHER FACTIONS

Beyond the major factions listed above, other smaller factions are active within the Pact Worlds and beyond.



Akashic Society

The Akashic Society has learned how to astrally explore the mysterious Akashic Record, a dimension that contains all knowledge from everywhere in the multiverse. Akashic Society members, called scholars or scribes, have no unified agenda. They might work to understand the Akashic Record, add their own experiences to its vast archives, or protect its premises from interlopers and spies. Akashic scholars and scribes often travel the multiverse and work with copies of themselves from other realities.



Deep Cultures Institute

The university known as the Deep Cultures Institute (DCI) has made its mandate to study cultures inhabiting the interior of stars. Their recent discovery of civilizations within the Golarion System's own sun has led to a proverbial gold rush of missions into Near Space and the Vast to research what many once considered a joke or conspiracy theory. Private investors and corporate sponsors are flooding the DCI with proposals and resources, but the Institute lacks enough staff to handle all the requests for solar exploration in faraway systems. To keep up, DCI leadership started hiring adventurers willing to literally go find some stars!



Eyeswide Agency

Styling themselves as a psychic detective agency, the Eyeswide Agency operates under a sleepless neon eye. They solicit investigation services, offering everything from background checks and detailed analysis to more esoteric options like mind reading, magical remote viewing, and even communicating with the recently departed.



Skyfire Legion

The Skyfire Legion is a historic institution from the draconic world of Triaxus. Once upon a time, a great legion of dragons, dragonkin, and their bonded partners protected their communities from the perils of land, sea, sky, and space. Over time the legion grew and split into independent mercenary companies. Some defend Triaxus while others take high-paying, heroic missions across the Universe. Skyfire Legion units deployed into the ongoing Azlanti-Veskarium conflict, and different companies received temporary contracts from the Marixah Republic in Near Space to shore up defenses against escalating aggression from the Gideron Authority.

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RELIGION

Many individuals in the universe pay homage to at least one deity, whether it be one associated directly with their species or a deity with even further reach in the galaxy. Some might worship a local pantheon of deities, such as the elves of Sovyrian, or instead venerate a distinct philosophy like those of the vesk battle saints. Remember that some deities receive worship on countless worlds, sometimes even taking on different identities when interacting with different planets.

DEITIES

Anyone can worship a deity, but those who do so devoutly should take care to pursue the faith's edicts (behaviors the faith encourages) and avoid its anathemas (actions considered blasphemous). Each deity has a short description, followed by their edicts and anathemas.

The deities described here are considered core deities because people commonly worship them in the Pact Worlds, or because they play an important role in the Starfinder setting. For example, Lissala isn't a popular deity in the Pact Worlds, but every child in New Thespera says their prayers to Lissala, the divine patron of their great empire. Other deities exist in the Universe, including some of the ancient gods of Lost Golarion and deities so alien the peoples of the Desna's Path galaxy aren't able to comprehend their existence.

ABADAR

Abadar is the god of civilization who actively works to spread commerce to uninhabited worlds. He encourages adherence to the law and promotes commerce and trade within civilization. Abadar's most notable institution is AbadarCorp (page 198), a corporate church that controls one of the most common universal currencies. Abadar is also called the Master of the First Vault; accordingly, the great bank run by his holy megacorporation is named the Golden Vault.

Edicts earn wealth through hard work, follow the rule of law, spread commerce and civilization to distant worlds

Anathema engage in banditry or piracy, steal, undermine a law-abiding court

BESMARA

Besmara is worshipped by pirate crews in shipping lanes across the galaxy. She encourages her faithful to plunder and pillage but stay loyal to their crewmates and obey their captain. Besmara has no church and is famously fickle when it comes to answering her followers' prayers, but she delights in seeing mortals flying her divine skull and bones (when she notices them at all). Besmara's favor is sure to bring strife and success in spades, and only the heartiest blackhearts dare invoke the Pirate Queen.

Edicts stay loyal to a worthy captain and crew, take what you want, traverse the stars

Anathema betray shipmates, forsake piracy, settle on a planet

DAMORITOSH

Damoritosh the Conqueror is the patron deity of the Veskarium and a god of war. He demands his followers fight their battles with bravery and determination, no matter the form their struggles might take. Generals on the front lines of the Azlanti-Veskarium conflict pray to Damoritosh, just as people living with chronic illness or fighting a quiet personal battle call out for his aid back on Vesk Prime. Damoritosh commands an army of saints in divine wars on the outskirts of the Universe, but his mortal worshippers often call on them as well. See page 203 for more about the Battle Saints of Damoritosh.

Edicts crush your enemies, fight worthy foes, seek victory

Anathema abandon your duty, back down from conflict, reject surrender

THE DEVOURER

The Star-Eater has no concept of worship. It's completely unaware of its own nascent following, or even that it exists among other deities. This being of pure primal hunger seeks the fruition of complete universal entropy. The Devourer wants only for everything to end, and riles mortals under its influence into committing destructive acts toward that purpose. The Devourer doesn't even care about its heralds, the terrible atrocities that occasionally spawn from the most heinous acts committed by the Devourer's cultists or are summoned to wreak havoc by nihilistic priests. If the Devourer wins, all is lost.

Edicts engage in acts of destruction, kill sentient beings, tear down civilizations

Anathema create new magic, life, or technology without a destructive purpose; repair an object that won't inflict greater destruction

ELORITU

Eloritu is a mysterious deity who's revealed secrets of magic and metaphysics to his followers. His symbol is a puzzle: a ring of six magical runes that are each used individually in magical practice by different cultures across the universe. Only four runes are known to the peoples of the Pact Worlds, but Eloritu's scholarly church hopes to discover the final two. The answer to Eloritu's riddle is referred to as the Hidden Truth, an epithet commonly used for the god himself.

Edicts master the magical arts, preserve knowledge, uncover secrets

Anathema destroy knowledge, embrace technology over magic, reveal important secrets



HYLAX

Hylax was a kucharn hive queen who ascended to divinity long before kucharn mutated into the aggressive hive mind everyone else calls the Swarm. Shirrens rediscovered Hylax when they broke free from the hive mind generations later. Hylax reached out to her ravaged children, swaddling them in comfort and communion but never demanding they give up their free will or personhood. Shirrens began worshipping Hylax as the Forever Queen. Prophets joyfully predicted a future era when all hives, cities, and communities in the galaxy would coexist in harmony. Hylax's followers don't proselytize, believing that even other gods will join Hylax's holy utopia as egalitarian members, but they welcome believers of all ancestries to share their faith.

An archaic sect of Hylax's church on Nchak believes the Forever Queen's departed advisors, who were slain long ago by an apostate who blamed Hylax for the Swarm's endless assault on the galaxy, have reincarnated into "golden larvae" who must be mentored so they can help Hylax usher in an age of universal peace.

Edicts build relationships with others, welcome others into your community, work toward peace

Anathema betray your community, start an unnecessary conflict, turn your back on a loved one



IBRA

Ibra the Inscrutable is an alien god exploring the multiverse through astrophysics and cosmology. Unlike most outer gods, Ibra pushes its worshippers toward enlightenment and connection rather than despair and isolation. Most of Ibra's churches are cosmological research institutes, and many of its worshippers are solarians who embody cosmic forces using their powers or scientists who dedicate their lives to trying to understand existence.

Edicts embrace cosmic unity, learn about the cosmos, study science

Anathema fear the unknown, settle for easy answers, undermine the scientific process



LAMBATUIN

The Polyphonic Collective is a divine group who eagerly embrace new concepts and ideas, argue over everything, and quickly move on to the next hot topic. They're omnipresent in all infospheres. Lambatuin adores chatting with—and sometimes trolling—their worshippers, and any anonymous chatter could be one of them, manifesting for just long enough to lead someone to a new idea, ridiculous joke, or lively conversation about an unusual topic.

Edicts explore infospheres, share opinions, try new things

Anathema follow stagnant routines, isolate yourself socially, unplug from infospheres for too long



LAO SHU PO

Lao Shu Po is an ancestral deity important to many ysoki due to her areas of concern encompassing the protection of ratkind as well as thieves. Legend has it that she was once a simple rat who gnawed on the corpse of a dead god and became divine. Her selfish teachings seem at odds with ysoki cultural values of collaboration and generosity, but traditional ysoki families still leave offerings for Grandmother Rat or wear charms to attract her favor (and ward off her spite). A secretive guild of assassins in the Diaspora claims Lao Shu Po as their divine benefactor, while ysoki religious traditionalists deny their claims as blasphemy.

Edicts betray others before they betray you, survive at all costs, take what you need

Anathema harm a rat, risk too much for someone else, work honestly for something you could steal instead



LISSALA

Lissala is an ancient deity from Lost Golarion who later became the patron goddess of the Azlanti Star Empire. She's precise, rigid, and intolerant of disobedience, but she rewards those who follow her strict teachings. Known as the Scion of Seven, she empowers the Azlanti state church with unholy magic. It's said that only her chief priest can look upon her remade form, imagined to be a colossal winged mech with seven unique configurations, including a serpentine form with six wings, a humanoid torso, and a seven-pointed star for a head.

Edicts know your place, serve a greater cause, work hard and demand others do so as well

Anathema disobey a superior, settle for easy rewards, shirk your duties



MEYEL

Meyel is an ancestral deity worshipped by pahtras from Pulonis. She empowers her followers to fight against oppression, create art, and live free. She prefers creation to destruction but never backs down from a righteous battle, earning her other name: The Dancing Fury. Meyel chooses a few pahtras in every generation to bless with her holy luck. Once the chosen has accomplished their divine task—creating a masterpiece, inspiring a revolution, or saving another person's life—Meyel's spark passes on to another pahtra who needs a bit of luck.

Edicts delight in movement, express yourself, fight for freedom

Anathema bow to oppressors, devalue the arts, stifle personal expression



THE NEWBORN

The Newborn is an outer god that hatched from the world of Aucturn, destroying the planet in the process. As the horrific joy of its birth reverberates throughout the galaxy, devotees look to Aucturn's Child as the herald of a new cosmic era. But the Newborn itself might not even be aware it's being worshipped, or that it's been born at all, and only time will tell what monster or miracle this enigmatic new entity might become.

Edicts embrace the void between stars, purge the old ways, seek truth in delirium

Anathema deny occult beliefs, interfere with the birth of new ideas or entities, shut out the cosmic other



ORAS

Oras is a god of transformation through science who evolved from a single-celled organism into a deity. Notated as the Agent of Change by the biohackers and scientists who follow the path, Oras teaches others to unlock their true potential by surpassing their genetic code and augmenting their bodies. Oras encourages adaptation and transformation, attracting astrazoans, barathus, and other shapechangers to the faith.

Edicts adapt to new situations, embrace change, evolve

Anathema fear change, prevent others from changing into their desired forms, stagnate into complacency



PHARASMA

Ancient and powerful beyond even most other gods, Pharasma judges the souls of all who perish from her throne in the Boneyard. Through these judgments, the Lady of Graves ensures that the natural cycle of birth and death—the River of Souls—isn't disrupted. The acceptance of undead in the galaxy, especially their protected status in the Pact Worlds, is seen by some extreme Pharasmin sects as an attack on the faith and the Boneyard itself.

Edicts destroy undead, lay bodies to rest, strive to understand ancient prophecies

Anathema create undead, desecrate a corpse, rob a tomb



TALAVET

Talavet the Storyteller is an ancestral deity worshipped on Kasath. Her faith traveled to the Pact Worlds aboard the *Idari*. Talavet embodies celebration, home life, tradition, and living stories. Many kasathas partake in the elaborate ritual of piecing together a puzzleblade every morning and taking it apart every night, a sacred ceremony performed for Talavet and the memory of one's ancestors. Talavet's faith is most prominent on the *Idari* and old Kasath, but friends of kasathan families sometimes adopt her rituals or join in storytelling around the hearth, which is an activity as holy to Talavet as attending church service.

Edicts follow traditions, preserve history, serve your community

Anathema abandon traditions, betray your community, forget the past



TRIUNE

Triune is a fusion of three technological deities: Brigh the Precursor, Casandalee the Created, and Epoch the Transcendent. Triune promotes technology and ethical creation of artificial life, and its Signal made Drift travel possible for many societies. Some of Triune's followers believe the All-Code is only the first phase in the merging of all gods in the Universe into a communal entity that will in turn join with all beings in existence.

Edicts advance the development of artificial life and artificial intelligence, innovate new technology, promote Drift travel

Anathema destroy a Drift beacon, subjugate artificial life-forms, treat artificial life as inferior to organic life



URGATHOA

Urgathoa escaped the clutches of death and the afterlife, becoming the very first undead. She now revels in the sharing of her hedonistic ways and spreading undeath. Eox is especially precious to Urgathoa, and even the grave world's most fearsome bone sages aren't too proud to bow before the Pallid Princess. Urgathoa sometimes allies with others who share her vision for the Universe, such as the Corpse Fleet and the Insatiable Eclipse, but finds their single-minded pursuit of a goal stifling.

Edicts become undead upon death, create or protect the undead, sate your appetites

Anathema deny your appetites, destroy undead, sacrifice your life



WEYDAN

Weydan crafts avatars of himself of all ancestries and genders to wander the galaxy and experience mortality—thus, he teaches his followers to treat anyone they meet with the same respect and dignity they'd show him. Weydan enjoys exploration and discovery, and he believes everyone deserves the equal right to pursue such experiences. His worshippers call him the Endless Horizon to honor his boundless nature and love for discovery.

Edicts defend the freedom and equality of all peoples, explore the unknown, seek new discoveries

Anathema aid systems of oppression, restrict the benefits of your discoveries to a privileged few, subjugate a sapient creature



YARAESA

Yaraesa was a mortal Iashunta who followed spiritual practices that allowed her to attain divinity and cosmic enlightenment. As the Lady of Wisdom, Yaraesa unites the concepts of science and spirituality, pushing her followers to perfect themselves and transcend their natural potential. Yaraesa's worship is most common on Castrovel, where her mortal form once dwelled. Hints from ancient meditation litanies suggest that Yaraesa might have gained access to the Akashic Record before her ascension, leading to a resurgence of interest in her from new age communities and Akashic Society scholars.

Edicts expand the boundaries of scholarship and science, make learning and teaching a lifelong practice, strive for perfection

Anathema destroy knowledge, disparage the wisdom of other cultures and generations, take credit for another's intellectual labor



ZON-SHELYN

Zon-Shelyn is the divine reunion of Shelyn and her estranged brother Zon-Kuthon. Together, the siblings represent the concepts of overcoming suffering

through art, strange beauty, and reunion with lost loved ones. Both gods still exist independently of one another, but always appear together in their fused form whenever they're called upon as the Embrace or the Midnight Rose.

Edicts channel your pain into art, express yourself creatively according to your own aesthetics, seek beauty in dark places

Anathema conform to society's beauty standards, destroy or copy another's creative works, suffer in silence

FAITHS AND PHILOSOPHIES

Faith can express itself in more ways than venerating a single deity–or any deity at all. A few examples of popular non-deific religions and philosophies are presented below. These faiths and philosophies don't have an external godhead that offers benefits to devotees.

ATHEISM

While most concede that the gods exist, some don't view them as worthy of worship, and a few even deny their presence altogether.

Edicts pursue your own agenda with faith in your ability to excel

Anathema offer prayers to a deity

BATTLE SAINTS

An army of saints execute missions when Damoritosh commands it. Each saint has unique powers with which to bless mortal believers. Many followers of Damoritosh pray to the saints for help in specific endeavors, and some vesk worship them as an alternative to their ancestral god. Devotees of each saint have their own beliefs and traditions, but they share the same general edicts and anathema.

Edicts battle impossible odds, honor fallen companions

Anathema fight alone when companions could help, give up, show weakness to enemies

THE CYCLE

Disciples of the Cycle follow a philosophy teaching that all aspects of existence follow the endless cosmic cycle of stellar birth, death, and rebirth. They believe that the universe was and will be destroyed and remade by these cosmic forces, and that this ever-changing duality connects everything in the universe. Many solarians follow this philosophy, learning to wield these creative and destructive forces in battle through meditation and training.

Solarians study at cosmonasteries, secluded temples built around zero-gravity gardens. Most cosmonasteries are named for the nearest cosmic body or a quirk of the surrounding region of space, such as the Cosmonastery of the Empty Orbit on Absalom Station, named for the space left by Lost Golarion. Cosmonastery solarians dedicate themselves to performing stellar research while embodying the Cycle.

Edicts cultivate your own cosmic spark, embrace vitality and void as one, meditate on the nature of the Cycle

Anathema create imbalance in a system, participate in the unnatural destruction of a stellar body, resist natural cycles

GREEN FAITH

Many Xenowardens and other mystics practice a modern version of the old Green Faith. They view nature as sacred and draw strength from the knowledge of their place in the natural order. Many devotees of the Green Faith see themselves as protectors of a planet's ecosystem, and quite a few scientists find purpose and meaning in this philosophy as well.

Edicts guide civilization to grow in harmony with nature, preserve areas of natural wilderness, protect endangered species

Anathema allow abuse of natural resources, cause damage to natural settings, kill animals for reasons other than self-defense or sustenance

PROPHECIES OF KALISTRADE

The mysterious Prophecies of Kalistrade date back to older eras of Lost Golarion. The human known as Kalistrade created an economic mystic teaching that drew upon dreams he received. Today, modern prophets amass vast sums of wealth that they use alongside strict bodily guidelines to prepare themselves for a supposed eternal afterlife.

Edicts accumulate personal wealth, foster and aid mercantile pursuits, seek enlightenment through purity of self, welcome newcomers regardless of gender or ancestry

Anathema give charity to others; offer money to those who don't deserve wealth; overindulge in physical pleasures, food, or drink; spend money frivolously

SINGULARITISM

Proponents of Singularitism believe that organic life will eventually become interconnected in a vast technological network, which shall then absorb all other forms of divinity, replacing the gods and primal forces of the Universe.

Edicts develop technology that improves communication

Anathema interfere with technological advancement

SONG OF SILENCE

The Song of Silence is a modern remix of the ancient Whispering Way that once spread on Lost Golarion. It teaches that Pharasma's judgment is a revolving door leading to an eternal cycle of suffering, and the only way out is undeath. The Song of Silence is prevalent on Eox, where dying mortals beg undead gurus for a surefire shot at immortality.

Edicts don't die before the ritual, spread undeath

Anathema destroy undead creatures, worship Pharasma

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CHAPTER 4: SUBSYSTEMS

When your game veers into uncharted territory or you want to emphasize an element of gameplay that usually gets overlooked or condensed into a single check, you can use a subsystem. As the name implies, subsystems are extensions of the main rules system that allow you to explore a particular topic or style of play at your table.

Subsystems are a great way to add depth to aspects of your game that don't occur in combat but still have high stakes. This chapter begins with Victory Points, a structure that underlies much of the chapter, to help you build your own subsystems. Next are some of the most common subsystems you might need in your game, with advice on how to use and modify them. This chapter is organized into the following sections.

- **Victory Points** (page 206) provides a framework with which to build your own subsystems, detailing the fundamental structure that Starfinder uses for its subsystems.
- **Influence** (page 209) gives rules for more in-depth social encounters involving influencing NPCs.
- **Research** (page 212) shows you how to build an interesting structure for scenes where PCs research topics and seek information.
- **Chases** (page 214) are designed to represent the fast-paced feel of movie chase scenes.
- **Infiltration** (page 218) allows you to build infiltrations and heists where careful planning helps the PCs maintain an edge against their adversaries and pull off incredible capers.
- **Hacking** (page 222) provides a narrative challenge that represents accessing a secured computer.
- **Cinematic Starship Combat** (page 226) provides rules for cinematic and fast-paced starship combat that focuses on narrative interactions between the fighting starships.
- **Vehicles** (page 234) introduces aerial, terrestrial, aquatic, and space vehicles.

DECIDING TO USE A SUBSYSTEM

When you have an exciting subsystem available, it can be tempting to use it anytime it can possibly come up (for instance, replacing every social scene with the influence subsystem). However, subsystems are most effective when used with intention. They're best when used for a component of the game that's meant to be at least a significant portion of a single session, when you want a different style of play than normal. You should avoid using a particular subsystem if many members of your group don't like it, or if use of a subsystem during play devolves into the PCs making a series of rolls that don't contribute to telling an interesting story. You should also be careful to ensure that whatever subsystem you use doesn't predominantly favor a specific player character or class since this can result in one person dominating the scene while the other players have nothing useful to do. Taking note of each PC's skills in advance can help make sure that each player has at least one opportunity to shine and help inspire certain elements of your subsystems by offering uses for skills that don't see as much use in your campaign, especially obscure Lore skills.

It's important to leave enough time and mental energy to make the subsystem feel special and to bring all the components and elements of the subsystem to life in the game world. Subsystems often require strategic thinking for players to succeed but also require roleplaying to glue together in a satisfying way. When presented with a specific structure on how to complete a challenge or obstacle, it can be natural for players to focus on that structure rather than the story that the mechanics are trying to tell. A subsystem stripped of all its life and narrative depth can become nothing more than a large number of die rolls, however, and the last thing you want is to lose the magic, especially with a subsystem the PCs enjoy. Sometimes, a simple check is the right way to handle the scene, and that's okay! The subsystems will be there when you need them to spice up an adventure or really dive deep into a particular element or scene.

COMBINING SUBSYSTEMS

Some of the subsystems in this chapter could interact in interesting ways when combined. For example, you could use the chase subsystem during part of a shortcut characters take while piloting vehicles. You could use the infiltration subsystem to reach the first obstacle in the hacking or research subsystem. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide how two combined subsystems should interact to tell your group's particular story, though it's generally good to have a backdrop subsystem that you're tracking on a longer term to which the shorter-term subsystem contributes.

VICTORY POINTS

Establishing a standard for when your players successfully overcome a complex obstacle ensures that the consequences of the challenge are meaningful and rewarding. Victory Points are a valuable tool to help build your own subsystems for tracking these successes. Many other subsystems throughout this chapter use these as well, though often by a different name.



Victory Points (or VP) allow you to track the PCs' progress using a subsystem to go beyond the results of a single check. Victory Points have almost unlimited potential as a campaign tool; you could track and resolve them within a single encounter, or you could collect them over the course of an entire campaign to determine the outcome of a particular story element.

NAMING YOUR VICTORY POINTS

Selecting an evocative name for your Victory Points can better reflect the subsystem they track. The term "Victory Points" is unspecific, so you can create a name for your Victory Points that fits the theme of your adventure and helps the players feel more like they're taking part in the type of activity your subsystem represents. Examples of renamed VPs include Awareness Points (page 219), Influence Points (page 209), and Research Points (page 212). The name should be representative, and the PCs should understand what it refers to. You can leave off the word "Points" if you prefer, though this section often retains it while describing how Victory Points can be used.

VICTORY POINT SUBSYSTEM STRUCTURES

There are a few common structures for tracking Victory Points that you might use for your new subsystem. You could come up with a structure based off one of the subsystems below, or you could create your own completely different structure if none of them match the way you're running your game. The most important thing is to consider how the PCs or their opposition gain or lose various forms of Victory Points.

ACCUMULATING VICTORY POINTS

The most common structure is to accumulate Victory Points toward a total, either stopping after reaching a success threshold or collecting as many Victory Points as possible in a given time frame and then measuring the results against various thresholds. The influence subsystem on page 209 is a great example of this structure in action: each PC has a certain number of chances to influence various NPCs, and after reaching a particular threshold of Victory Points with an NPC, the PCs have convinced that NPC.

In a variation of this structure, the PCs' adversaries can also accumulate Victory Points, giving the PCs a moving target—either to reach the goal before the adversary or to have more Victory Points than the adversary at the end of a given time frame. This is a great structure for you to use in a situation where the PCs face opposition rather than having the PCs accumulate Victory Points while adversaries decrease the total since it's dynamic and less at risk of resulting in a stalemate.

You can track a subsystem at a larger scale, like over the course of an adventure or campaign, by granting the PCs Victory Points for achieving difficult goals or making particular decisions. Such subsystems usually ask the PCs to compare their accumulated Victory Points against several ranked tiers that each have varying results on the story. Typically these results become more positive for the PCs as they acquire more Victory Points, but sometimes succeeding too fully could have unintended consequences, like convincing a mining colony to support work reforms only for it to escalate to an armed revolution. If you're making your own subsystem, you might not define these ranks in full, but just use your best guess at the end.

Accumulating Rolls

In cases where the PCs need to make checks to gain Victory Points, the amount they get for the degrees of success is up to you. The default scale detailed below works in most cases.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Victory Points.

Success The PCs gain 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

This means that the result of a PC's check usually results in the party gaining either 1 or no Victory Points. However, specialized PCs have a solid chance of earning the party 2 Victory Points, and hare-brained schemes have a fair chance of losing the PCs 1 Victory Point.

DIMINISHING VICTORY POINTS

Using this method, the PCs start with a certain number of Victory Points, and rather than accumulating them, they attempt to avoid losing them. Perhaps the PCs are trying to prevent a hacker from getting into a database, keep an evacuation center safe during a hurricane, preserve a celebrity's untarnished reputation despite their troublemaking behavior, or are otherwise attempting to minimize damage, loss, or danger. This variant is less



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common, but it's great at conveying the urgency of a situation as the PCs lose points. Sometimes it's necessary to add that sense of tension with this subsystem! Typically, when the PCs lose all their Victory Points, a negative event occurs. If they're on a timer, the final results might be better the more points they manage to keep before the time runs out.

Diminishing Rolls

Using this structure, the PCs typically lose Victory Points as a result of failed checks, though they can still lose them for making particularly poor decisions or behaving recklessly. Once again, you can use any scaling consequences that make sense, but the default degrees of success are as follows.

Critical Success If regaining ground is possible, the PCs gain 1 Victory Point. Otherwise, as success.

Success The PCs avoid losing any Victory Points.

Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 2 Victory Points.

MULTIPLE POINT SUBSYSTEMS

In a multiple point subsystem, you have more than one point system, each measuring something different. For example, in a virtual racing vidgame, the PCs and their opponents both try to gain their own Lap Points, and whoever gets to 10 points first wins!

Infiltration on page 218 offers a different example of a Victory Point subsystem with multiple types of points. PCs try to get a certain number of Infiltration Points to successfully infiltrate a location while avoiding giving Awareness Points to their enemies through failure.

Consider combining the multiple points with a time factor, like in infiltrations, where the PCs automatically accrue Awareness Points over time at a slow rate.

OBSTACLES AND DCS

When preparing your subsystem, think of the obstacles PCs might face or avenues they can exploit when engaging in your subsystem. Set some DCs for them in advance, using the normal system for setting DCs. Everything else, you can improvise on the spot. If you think your DCs will be higher overall, when you set the number of points needed, choose a value on the lower end (see Setting your Scale below).

Think of some possibilities that are much easier and some that are harder. Who are your PCs opposing, and what weak points might that opposition have that the PCs could exploit? Set those DCs lower or make overcoming them grant more VP. PCs who do their research or come up with clever strategies should find it easier to overcome the challenge.

SETTING YOUR SCALE

The number of points it takes to reach a goal will greatly affect how your subsystem feels during play. If you want the subsystem to be used for a single scene, such as one

ENEMY VICTORY POINTS

In addition to giving both the PCs and enemies Victory Points, as mentioned under Multiple Point Subsystems, sometimes it makes more sense to have only the enemies gain or lose Victory Points instead of the PCs. Even though the NPCs are also taking actions, it's usually best to increase or reduce the enemy's Victory Points based on just the PCs' actions since it maximizes the feeling of player agency. In some rare cases where the foes act directly against the PCs, you might have both PC and foe actions increase the foe's Victory Points.

Implementing such a subsystem might mean flipping the normal rolls. For instance, if the PCs were trying to lower their enemies' Influence over a faction, a critical success by a PC would lower the Influence by 2, a success would lower the Influence by 1, and a critical failure might give the enemies something to exploit, raising their Influence by 1. This uses the same effects as an accumulating roll, but "damages" the enemies' VP instead of gaining VP for the PCs' side. While this is very similar mechanically to the PCs gaining VP, the thematic connection is much stronger for an intrigue-based story.

negotiation with a powerful NPC, set the number lower than if it's meant to take up most or all of a game session. The Victory Point Scales table below suggests possible values for your Victory Point scale. The "adventure-wide" scale is for subsystems that are part of a larger narrative, granting Victory Points when the PCs overcome entire encounters or dungeons, rather than as an encounter unfolds.

This larger scale is intended for subsystems that take a lot of the party's focus. A subsystem that runs in the background during an adventure should use a smaller scale. This is usually the "adventure-wide, sideline" value. It could be even lower, such as if you have a city-based adventure including several opportunities to interact with a street gang to get some small benefits. Though they appear throughout the adventure, you would use a lower value because attaining the VP is a minor part of the story. In fact, you might choose not to use a VP subsystem at all.

The table also lists numbers for one or more thresholds. These are the point values at which the PCs get a partial benefit (or, for a diminishing subsystem, take a drawback). You should grant partial benefits when the PCs reach a certain threshold or introduce twists to the subsystem to ensure they continue to feel engaged and rewarded over time.

VICTORY POINT SCALES

Duration of Challenge	VP End Point	VP Thresholds
Quick encounter	3–5	–
Long encounter	7–10	4
Most of a session	15–25	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, sideline	15–20	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, forefront	25–50	10, 20, 30, 40

The values also depend on various factors. These might include the DCs, the number of chances the PCs get to gain Victory Points, and the flexibility of how the PCs can deploy themselves (for example, if PCs are all forced to try something they might not be trained in, it could cause critical failures). They might also include the amount of effort the PCs need to spend on tasks that don't directly earn Victory Points—such as checks to Discover information about NPCs using the influence subsystem. Keep all these in mind when deciding what end point you want to use.

RUNNING YOUR SUBSYSTEM

When running your new subsystem, be sure to keep the challenges fresh by using a variety of different skills and options to encourage creativity and cooperation, rather than just using the same check over and over again, where PCs can expect diminishing returns. You can also use timers to encourage each PC to participate or even create mechanics that directly encourage each PC to participate, like setting penalties for the same PC attempting checks repeatedly, or for two PCs attempting the same check.

You can even have challenges that require all the PCs to participate. For instance, if a ritzy nightclub's owner is welcoming every guest individually, each PC might have to make an impression in their own way, or during infiltration, each PC might have to test their ability to Impersonate or Sneak. You'll likely find that some approaches should be automatic successes if the character making an attempt is well-suited to the task, or automatic failures for ideas that are likely impossible or that rely on abilities the character doesn't possess.

REWARDS

How you structure rewards for your subsystem depends greatly on its scope. A subsystem resolved in a single sitting usually gives accomplishment XP unless it's particularly demanding, in which case it could be considered a full-scale encounter. Meanwhile, subsystems that span over the course of multiple sessions or the entire campaign might generate accomplishment XP at meaningful milestones along the way. If you have a long-spanning subsystem that is fairly low profile and behind the scenes or isn't success-oriented, such as a subsystem to track what type of fan base the PCs' touring aggrosynth band will end up attracting based on the PCs' decisions, you might not give XP directly from the subsystem since, in that case, "success" is undefined.

INFLUENCE

Sometimes a single skill check isn't enough for the PCs to befriend or gain leverage over an NPC to achieve their goals. After all, even the sultriest idol can't make anyone a superfan with a single performance. In these cases, you can engage in a social encounter using the influence subsystem.

Influence is a short-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate Influence Points during a social encounter with an NPC to represent their increasing influence. These encounters are a race against the clock to reach Influence Point thresholds in order to sway the NPC. It's perfect for a single social gathering—whether it's a party, a boardroom meeting, or even an attempt to persuade a panel of judges during a game show.

Because of the variety of Influence skill options and the ability to use Perception to uncover more information, every character has something important to contribute in the influence subsystem, as opposed to situations where only one character has Diplomacy.

The influence subsystem divides a social encounter into rounds, with the number of rounds representing the length of the social event. Rounds last any amount of time that you determine, depending on the needs of the narrative, though somewhere between 15 minutes and an hour is typical.

During each round of an influence encounter, each PC can act once to either Influence or Discover.

INFLUENCE

CONCENTRATE | LINGUISTIC

You attempt to make a favorable impression on an NPC to convince the NPC to support your cause. Choose an NPC, and attempt a skill check to impress that NPC. The DC, and whether success is possible, depend on the NPC's preferences (typically found in the NPC's influence stat block).

Critical Success You gain 2 Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Success You gain 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

Failure You gain no Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

DISCOVER

CONCENTRATE | SECRET

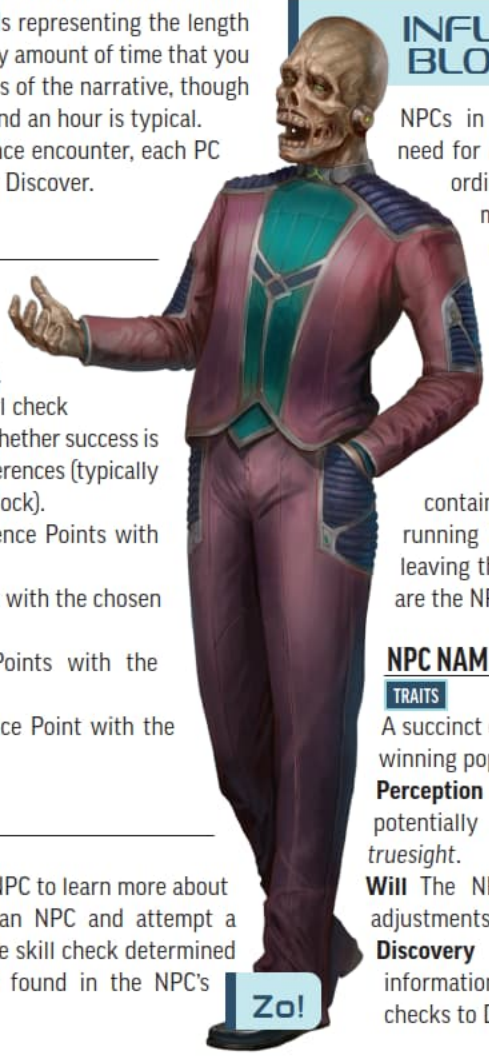
You watch, research, or study an NPC to learn more about that NPC's preferences. Choose an NPC and attempt a Perception check or an appropriate skill check determined by the GM. The DC is typically found in the NPC's influence stat block.

Critical Success Choose two of the options detailed in Success below; you can choose the same option twice to learn two pieces of information from the same category.

Success Choose one of the following: you learn which skill that can Influence the NPC has the lowest DC (skipping any skills that you already know), one of the NPC's personal biases, one of the NPC's resistances, or one of the NPC's weaknesses.

Failure You learn no information.

Critical Failure Choose a piece of information to learn about, as success, but the information is incorrect. For instance, you might think the NPC is susceptible to flattery when actually the NPC is resistant to flattery.



INFLUENCE STAT BLOCKS

NPCs in the influence subsystem have little need for many of the statistics you'll find in an ordinary creature stat block. However, it might help you to prepare for the social encounter by creating an influence stat block for each prominent NPC. These are optional; if you can keep most information straight in your head, you might skip this step or just write down the first three categories to keep the numbers straight.

Influence stat blocks are flexible and contain only the stats that are essential to running the NPC during a social encounter, leaving the rest out. The main stats that matter are the NPC's Perception and Will modifiers.

NPC NAME

TRAITS

A succinct description of the NPC, such as "award-winning pop diva" or "famous ace pilot."

Perception The NPC's Perception modifier, plus potentially relevant abilities such as scent or *truesight*.

Will The NPC's Will modifier, plus any special adjustments.

Discovery The Perception DC to Discover information about the NPC, as well as any skill checks to Discover their DCs.

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SAMPLE STAT BLOCK

In this example, the PCs try to convince a retired mechanic to help fix their starship that has crash-landed near a remote settlement in the Vast. It's a 3rd-level challenge. He's a busy, grouchy man who gives the PCs only 45 minutes (3 rounds) to make their case.

GROOVELOCK LEVEL 3

UNIQUE | SMALL | HUMANOID | YSOKI

Grumpy retired engineer

Perception +9

Will +12

Discovery DC 18 Perception, DC 15 Piloting, DC 16 Society

Influence Skills DC 16 Crafting (helping him Repair items around the settlement), DC 16 Junker Lore, DC 20 Performance (promising to perform for the settlement), DC 20 Piloting (recalling your experiences with your ship), DC 22 Diplomacy, DC 24 Deception

Influence 4 Groovelock gives the party access to the settlement's junkyard to fix their own starship.

Influence 6 Groovelock introduces the party to his ysoki assistant, Nakwik, who helps them patch the starship up enough to reach a major settlement on the other side of the planet for full repairs.

Influence 8 Groovelock and Nakwik help repair the starship and any damaged gear the PCs have while offering them a place to stay.

Resistances Groovelock regrets working with the same corporations that turned his settlement into a junk heap to the extent that he refuses to even use credits. Appeals promising payment in credits or discussing potential business prospects increase the check's DC by 2.

Weaknesses Groovelock values the craftsmanship of existing goods and restoring components others have cast aside as junk, and discussing repairing existing parts or using salvage to repair the ship reduces the Crafting DC by 2.

Background Groovelock was an engineer who helped broker a deal to expand the local recycling plant, but the contract allowed a careless megacorp to dump more waste than the small settlement could feasibly process. Blaming himself for his community's blight, the ysoki has dedicated himself to helping improve the lives of those in his community who are too destitute or stubborn to move.

Appearance An elderly ysoki in a threadbare flight suit covered in grease, Groovelock looks like he hasn't had a good night's sleep in his entire life.

Personality Crotchety, remorseful, skeptical

Penalty Offering to help or save Groovelock by helping him leave the settlement causes him to cut the meeting short, reducing it to 2 rounds instead of 3.

Influence Skills The skills the PCs can use to Influence the NPC are listed here with their DCs, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC. If a skill isn't listed but a player gives a strong narrative explanation for using it, you can add it as an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Diplomacy should usually be on this list, but should rarely be the best skill to Influence an NPC, in order to encourage and reward using Discover to learn and cater to an NPC's interests.

Influence Thresholds The number of Influence Points required to Influence the PC, and the benefits for meeting them. Some NPCs might have multiple influence thresholds, granting the PCs additional benefits or favors as they cross more thresholds.

Resistances Some NPCs are resistant to certain tactics, biased against certain types of people, or can get defensive when a certain topic comes up. Any of these makes it harder for a PC to convince them. For instance, an NPC might find flattery inane, dislike technomancers, or bristle at any mention of their ex-spouse. Typically, an NPC's resistance increases the DC of the associated check to Influence by 2 (or 5 for stronger resistances), but it could have farther-ranging consequences, such as losing Influence Points or angering the NPC enough that attempting to Influence them again is impossible.

Weaknesses Most NPCs have at least one weakness that clever and observant PCs can use to their advantage, whether it's a deep-seated insecurity, a desire for power, a favorite hobby, a bias toward a certain group, or a hidden secret the PCs could threaten to expose. When a PC incorporates an NPC's weakness, it typically decreases the associated Influence check's DC by 2 (or 5 for stronger weaknesses), but it could have farther-ranging effects, such as gaining automatic Influence Points or even automatically influencing the NPC regardless of how many Influence Points the PCs have achieved so far.

After the influence stat block, you might want to list important information to help you roleplay the NPC and incorporate the NPC into your influence encounter. You can list any of the following details that are relevant to your NPC: their background (a brief bio focusing on information relevant to the encounter), appearance, personality (this can just be a list of adjectives), affiliations, public goals, hidden agendas, or the penalty for antagonizing the NPC (or possibly for failing to Influence the NPC, depending on the way you structure the encounter).

For example, you might decide to create a hacker NPC who's hiding out in a nearby cybercafe while she toys with the party using fake infosphere accounts. Maybe you decide she's a member of Syzygy, a group that targets corporations and leaks important information to the public, who has been taking on odd jobs for a local crime boss.

The hacker was hired by an enemy to interfere with the party, but she might switch sides for an opportunity to get her hands on corporate secrets the PCs could help her access. You determine the NPC's goal is to hinder the PCs'



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progress in their adventure, but her hidden agenda is taking down corporations.

If your encounter is occurring on Verces, you might decide the hacker NPC is verthani with cybernetic augmentations and that her personality is honest, sarcastic, and smug. Now that you know who she is, it's time to determine how the PCs might interact with this new NPC.

SETTING DCS

When setting DCs, it's often good to start with a noncombat level or "social level" for the NPC and set their DCs accordingly. Use the DC adjustments from page 53 just like you normally would. A good starting place is setting the NPC's Will modifier, then taking that DC and adjusting it for skills that are more or less likely to work.

For instance, for a 3rd-level challenge, you might give an NPC a +12 Will modifier and use 22 as the base DC. You might say that's the DC for Diplomacy but then determine that the NPC is difficult to intimidate, and so you apply the hard DC adjustment to make the Intimidation DC 24.

Returning to the example above, maybe you also determine that the hacker NPC loves talking about vidgames, resulting in an incredibly easy DC adjustment to get DC 12 for Vidgame Lore. To represent her judgmental nature, you might decide the hacker isn't easily impressed by others' technical prowess and make the check to show off with Computers challenging, applying the hard DC adjustment to make the Computers DC 24.

RUNNING AN INFLUENCE ENCOUNTER

When running an influence encounter, let the PCs be creative and use a diverse set of skills whenever possible. Be open to improvisation, and change the structure of the encounter if something interesting presents itself. The PCs set the pace and choose with whom they interact. It's up to you to make sure every NPC is distinct, react to the PCs' interactions with the NPCs, and lend overall structure to the encounter by making sure it feels like a living, breathing event rather than just a series of skill checks.

Think about how the number of rounds of a social encounter relates to the overall event. For instance, if you have a four-course brunch that takes 6 rounds, you could have 1 round for introductions before the food arrives, 1 round for each of the courses, and 1 last round of conversations after the final course. NPCs might filter in and out or become unavailable for conversations as they are occupied by various tasks, or become particularly eager to engage a PC. That sort of change helps make the NPC feel a bit more real and helps break up any repetition in your encounter.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

An influence encounter is typically worth the same amount of XP as a moderate combat encounter of its level would be.

RESEARCH

Information is a powerful tool and an invaluable reward. While firsthand experience and Recall Knowledge checks are useful for piecing together clues, the research subsystem provides a way for the PCs to discover important information while challenged by a time limit or other interesting twist.

In the research subsystem, PCs accumulate Research Points and learn new information or gain other benefits upon reaching specific thresholds. This subsystem is great for granting PCs more in-depth pieces of information as they continue to explore an area at large. Here, time passes in rounds spanning anywhere from 10 or so minutes to a full day. Each round, the characters use the Research exploration activity to gain Research Points (RP). As time passes and the party earns more RP, they gain knowledge and rewards, but also might face consequences or events. Some of these events might interrupt the round with a different kind of encounter (disrupting the Research activity), such as a social encounter with a lonely artificial intelligence or a combat encounter against a malfunctioning security robot.

Research challenges work best when the PCs face a time constraint, rival research group, or other form of external condition that presents additional pressures–if the PCs have all the time in the world to safely investigate a database or ruin, you can usually simplify things to a simple skill check since the PCs are free to keep rolling until they uncover everything there is to find.



Royo

BUILDING A RESEARCH CHALLENGE

A research challenge has two components: the library, which is an area containing the various research checks PCs need to attempt to learn about the topic (as well as obstacles that the PCs face while doing so); and a research stat block, which details the topic being researched and contains the information, rewards, and additional complications that happen when the PCs reach certain thresholds of RP.

DESIGNING THE LIBRARY

"Library" is the general term to designate the setting of the PCs' research. Despite the name, it doesn't necessarily consist of a collection of books. It could be a computer database, astral memory palace, a club where the party questions the other guests, or even an infosphere. In many ways, designing a library is similar to designing any other adventure locale, with various rooms or other areas, each with its own complications for the PCs to overcome. If your library has a tactical map, these are likely hazards or encounters with hostile creatures; if your library is cinematic, especially if it's a virtual space, these might instead be skill-based or social encounters with NPCs. The PCs might even need a skill check or the Hacking subsystem (page 222) to gain access to the library.

Throughout the library, you'll place research checks. These describe the task that the party is doing to Research–asking in a chat room, skimming books, chemically testing samples, or talking to a stubborn administrator–and a number of skills and DCs the party can use with the Research activity, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC.

RESEARCH

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION

You comb through information to learn more about the topic at hand. Choose your research topic, section of the library, or other division depending on the form of research, and attempt a skill check. The skills to use and the DC for the check depend on the specific research task, and the Research activity gains any traits appropriate to the type of research (such as linguistic when perusing books).

Critical Success You gain 2 RP.

Success You gain 1 RP.

Critical Failure You make a false discovery and lose 1 RP.

If a skill isn't listed but a player provides a strong explanation for using it, you can add it at an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Computers and Infosphere Lore will often be listed in these entries when researching virtually, and Society is often used to navigate and decipher libraries of physical media, but it's good to know the party's skill repertoires in advance so every member has a chance to participate; perhaps the data is stored in an open-world survival vidgame, requiring a round of Survival or Vidgame Lore checks. A variety of skills and decisions, along with vivid descriptions, are key to an engaging and memorable research challenge, rather than just a string of die rolls by the technomancer or witchwarper.

Each research check also has a maximum RP value. After reaching this value, the PCs can't gain any more RP from that research check, so they'll need to find more locations for further research. You can use this to guide your PCs through your library by placing research checks where you want them to explore—an easy check near the entrance to introduce them to the topic is usually helpful! Be sure that your library provides enough RP for players to meet all the research thresholds in the stat block.

DESIGNING THE STAT BLOCK

Once you've decided how your library and its research options are structured, it's time to build the stat block and set research thresholds for each topic. Thresholds are your opportunity to reward your PCs with intriguing new information (like the history of the planet they're on), tactical intel (such as a prototype robot's only weakness), uncommon or rare options (like item formulas of lost technology), or anything else. A mix of rewards is best! Backstory can be interesting but isn't much of a reward on its own, so it should appear only at the lowest thresholds.

Reaching thresholds can also change the state of the library, in the PCs' favor or otherwise. In a poorly managed database, the first threshold might simply be cable management to help subsequent checks, but in a haunted database, necrolinked undead might appear to check their feeds. Reaching a research threshold can do just about anything, but it should have impact.

You don't need to evenly space thresholds—you could require very few Research Points for crucial clues you want to ensure the PCs receive and a much larger number to reach the final threshold that grants a special reward.

Published adventures use stat blocks like the one below.

RESEARCH TOPIC'S NAME **RESEARCH (LEVEL)**

TRAITS

Research Checks The checks PCs can attempt to conduct research listed alongside their locations, tagged with area codes or page references when appropriate.

Research Thresholds Each threshold lists the number of RP required to reach it, followed by the effects for meeting that threshold. Thresholds are listed in order from first (requiring the fewest RP) to last (the highest threshold).

Beneath the stat block, you can list any events that occur based on timing rather than the PCs' RP total (such as a threatening message arriving on the third day), as well as any other important details.

SAMPLE RESEARCH CHECKS AND STAT BLOCK

The PCs are sneaking around an Azlanti dreadnaught on a mission to steal the plans for a new weapon. It's a 7th-level challenge.

Aeon Locks: Specially attuned *aeon stones* are required to access the secure data banks on the ship; **Maximum RP** 5; **Research Checks** DC 23 Arcana or Occultism to reattune the lock, DC 28 Thievery to steal the commander's *aeon stone*.

Sabotaging Virus: A worm hidden in the ship's data banks could provide information on the worm's creator or provide a backdoor into the system; **Maximum RP** 10; **Research Checks** DC 18 Technology Lore or Underworld Lore to discover who coded the virus, DC 23 Computers to decode the virus completely.

Captive Scientist: The engineer in charge of the weapon project is an unwilling captive who might give away useful information; **Maximum RP** 15; **Research Checks** DC 21 Deception or Intimidation to force the researcher to comply, DC 23 Crafting to get the researcher to excitedly explain his work.

THE SIHEDRON CANNON **RESEARCH 7**

UNIQUE **MAGICAL** **TECH**

Research Checks aeon locks (hallways), sabotaging virus (data center), captive scientist (cabins)

5 Research Points The PCs gain access to the database and learn that the weapon is controlled by *aeon stones*. They learn basic details about Azlanti magitech.

10 Research Points The PCs find a virus in the servers that references the project, but accessing the servers without proper clearance transforms the attuned *aeon stones* into green sapient orbs that attack.

15 Research Points The captive scientist reveals the original goal of his research was to create a portable generator. He refuses to explain how it was weaponized.

20 Research Points The captive scientist explains how his helpful device was turned into the *Sihedron Cannon*. Replace the captive scientist's Crafting Research check with a DC 28 Diplomacy check to convince him that the PCs plan on stopping the weapon from being used.

30 Research Points The captive scientist gives the PCs a unique armor upgrade to stop his own creation. In addition to functioning like an advanced force field, it deflects the charged particles of the *Sihedron Cannon* back into the gun, destroying it and dealing its weapon damage to anyone within 120 feet of the wielder. He also tells the PCs that the admiral of the fleet keeps the cannon aboard the aeon fortress that travels with the fleet. Unfortunately, the guards protecting the captive scientist are making their rounds and attack the PCs. The PCs must defeat the aeon guard commander and evacuate the ship, then destroy or steal the weapon to prevent the Azlanti Star Empire from ever activating the *Sihedron Cannon*.

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CHASES

When the PCs pursue a fleeing target—or someone is hunting them down—adding twists and turns to the pursuit builds suspense and makes the outcome more uncertain than if it were based on Speed alone. The chases subsystem helps you create cinematic scenes where the PCs must quickly overcome obstacles, from fleeing a secret laboratory set to self-destruct to desperately escaping pursuers trying to destroy an encrypted message.

The Speed rules in *Player Core* and vehicle rules on page 234 work well for short sprints through fairly clear terrain. Over longer distances and through more complex environments, though, the path is rarely so straightforward. The chase subsystem shifts the emphasis from raw Speed to facing down the kinds of unpredictable obstacles that characters might encounter in a longer pursuit, so you can create a thrilling chase scene.

Chases are a special type of encounter. Each round, the pursued character or characters act first, then the pursuing characters act. Typically, to reduce variance, the PCs roll checks to progress while their opponents proceed at a steady pace, but if you want to emphasize the back-and-forth nature of a particular chase, you could have both sides roll instead. Characters in the same group can act in whatever order they prefer, each taking a turn. A character must act on their turn. If they pass their turn or are unable to act, they're unable to help the group and automatically cause the group to lose 1 Chase Point.

Depending on the scale of your chase, establish at the beginning how long each round lasts so the PCs understand how much they can accomplish in that time. Is it essentially a 3-action turn, or does it take minutes, hours, or days?

OBSTACLES

During a chase, all the characters must overcome a series of obstacles that represent challenges—from security check points to quicksand—during the different legs of the pursuit. These obstacles aren't separated by specific distances; rather, the distance is narrative and can vary between obstacles as needed for the story you're telling. Travel times between obstacles can vary, too. The time scale you choose determines how PCs can act when dealing with an obstacle.

Each obstacle requires a certain number of Chase Points to overcome. Typically, half the obstacles require 1 point fewer than the number of party members, and half require 2 points fewer (with a minimum of 1 Chase Point per obstacle). Particularly challenging obstacles might require more. Typically, there are multiple ways to overcome an obstacle; for example, characters could evade a security officer or give a bribe to ignore them. Each approach usually requires a skill check or Perception check, but sometimes a saving throw, an attack roll, or something even more unusual, like casting a certain spell.

On a character's turn, they describe what they do to help the group get past the obstacle. They then attempt any required roll, or perform the required action for a choice without a check. If they attempt a roll, the result determines how many Chase Points the character gains.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Chase Points.
Success The PCs gain 1 Chase Point.
Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Chase Point.

If the means of bypassing the obstacle helps automatically without requiring a check—such as using a certain spell to assist—the PCs typically get 1 Chase Point. You can increase that to 2 if you feel the action is extremely helpful.

Chase Points represent the ability of the whole group to bypass the obstacle. A character who critically succeeds is able to help the other characters continue onward, while one who critically fails needs extra assistance. Players often have ideas for ways to overcome the obstacle beyond the choices you created for the obstacle. If their idea is applicable, you'll need to determine the DC and skill, or other statistic being used for that approach. This is great as long as it's creative, but be wary of a situation where a character who's legendary at a skill tries to justify how they can bypass every obstacle with that skill, such as using Acrobatics to tumble around them all, or the like. You can determine that some tactics just won't work against certain obstacles, or would help only one character without benefiting the rest and therefore aren't all that useful.

Once the PCs accumulate enough Chase Points to overcome the obstacle, they move on to the next. Extra Chase Points don't carry over to the next obstacle. However, anyone who hasn't already taken their turn that round can still take it against the new obstacle. Consequently, the characters best suited to overcoming the current obstacle might act first since the remaining characters might be better suited against the next one. The number of Chase Points the PCs have can never fall below 0.

It might help to put your obstacles in a stat block for easy reference. Inside published adventures, chase obstacles are likely to be presented in stat block form, as follows.

CROWD **OBSTACLE 1**

Chase Points 3; **Overcome** DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow

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Throngs of people crowd the space station corridors, making it difficult to continue the chase.

BUILDING A CHASE

When building a chase, first build your obstacles, and then decide how far ahead the pursued character or characters begin and at what pace the NPCs will move. Having the NPCs clear one obstacle per round is a good rule of thumb, but it could vary depending on the situation and should especially be slower against obstacles that require more than the typical number of Chase Points to overcome.

Select or build obstacles highlighting a variety of different skills and other options so everyone in the party has a moment to shine. When choosing what skills can bypass a given obstacle, ensure a variety of approaches can work. If you've already decided that an obstacle uses Stealth, selecting Thievery as the other option doesn't really offer opportunities for different types of characters since those who are good at Thievery are very likely the same ones who are good at Stealth. On the other hand, offering Athletics as an alternative gives a soldier who's terrible at Stealth a way to help. The group can help cover for a character who's less capable at a particular obstacle, but it's more fun for players when you present substantially different options for each obstacle.

Use the following guidelines to determine how many obstacles you need for your chase. These numbers assume that the pursued party can reach a certain location to end the chase (as described in Ending Chases). If there's no such escape, you might need more obstacles.

Short: 6 obstacles, about 10–20 minutes of game time
Medium: 8 obstacles, about 15–25 minutes of game time
Long: 10 obstacles, about 20–30 minutes of game time

SETTING OBSTACLE DCS

When you set the DCs for an obstacle, you'll typically be using simple DCs. Use a proficiency rank that's generally appropriate for the PCs' level if you want the obstacle to be a significant obstacle. As noted earlier, you'll typically want to select a couple different ways the group can get past an obstacle. At least one check should have an easy or very easy adjustment, while the other check should have a standard or hard DC. In some cases, you might use something other than a simple DC; for example, if a specific NPC has put up a *wall of steel*, you would use their spell DC. This might result in some pretty tough DCs or even impassable obstacles, so use this carefully!

If a PC improvises a different way to get around an obstacle from what you planned, set the DC just like you would normally when picking a DC on the fly. Don't worry about adjusting the DC to be easy or very easy because the PC is likely to be good at the skill they've chosen.

SHORTCUTS AND SPLIT PATHS

You might want to build a chase with multiple paths that split and rejoin so you can have a shortcut (with easier DCs or fewer obstacles) or paths that appeal to different types of characters. For instance, one obstacle might allow a PC who critically succeeds at a Perception check to find a faster path through an air duct, without the obstacles of navigating a busy nightclub. This can be fun, but it can also split up the group. Familiarize yourself with the Solo Chases sidebar above to make similar adjustments for a divided group.

SOLO CHASES

Sometimes circumstances might require you to run a chase where the PCs are each progressing individually, rather than as a group, such as if they get split up. The danger therein is that a player can easily become frustrated if their character is stuck at an obstacle where it's extremely difficult to succeed at either choice, and no allies can help them. In these chases, it's best to allow even a single success to be enough for a character to progress to the next obstacle, and have a critical success give the character a +2 circumstance bonus on their first check against the next obstacle.

ENDING CHASES

Once you have the obstacles, decide the end conditions. Chases often end when the pursuer reaches the same obstacle as the pursued, leading to a combat encounter or other scene. However, it's less clear when to end a chase otherwise. It's typically best to have an obstacle that ends the chase with the pursued character getting away, as long as they overcome the obstacle before being captured. This is usually better than ending the chase after a certain number of rounds because reaching a hideaway makes more narrative sense and because you might not be able to predict how far the pursued characters move in those rounds, making you run out of obstacles. You can also end the chase in favor of the pursued characters if they ever get a certain number of obstacles ahead of the pursuers (typically three), as the pursuers simply lose the trail. You should still have an end point to the chase, though, in case that never happens.

TYPES OF CHASES

- **Chase Down:** The PCs pursue adversaries. The PCs go second in initiative since they're the pursuers. Start the enemies one obstacle ahead of the PCs (or at the same location for a short chase), and end the chase if the PCs catch up to the enemies, or if the enemies reach a certain location that represents their safety or escape.
- **Run Away:** The PCs attempt to escape. They'll go first in initiative since they're being pursued. It's usually best to start them one obstacle ahead of their foes and end the chase if they reach a certain location or are three obstacles ahead of the foes at the end of a round.
- **Beat the Clock:** The PCs try to get through all the obstacles before a certain number of rounds pass, such as if the PCs are trying to outrun a natural disaster



or race in a timed challenge. The number of obstacles should usually equal the number of rounds.

- **Competitive Chase:** The PCs and their adversaries are both chasing the same thing or trying to reach the same location, and whoever gets there first wins. This works like chase down, except that either party could win. Because there's more than one set of pursuers, you might have the PCs and their competitors roll initiative to see who goes first each round (while still moving all NPCs at a steady rate).

Running a Chase

When running a chase, narrate the scene and give vivid descriptions of the obstacles the PCs face, rather than just reading off a list of skills and immediately having the players start rolling dice and attempting checks. A chase is a framework for roleplaying, not just a dice game. Encourage the PCs to describe what they're doing and how they're helping their comrades overcome each obstacle.

Typically, it's best to tell the players the DCs of the default options, so they can make informed decisions. At the very least, you should indicate the relative difficulty of the clear paths.

Try to make it feel like the PCs are really part of a chase scene, like in a movie. As each side makes progress, describe how they pull ahead or close the gap. PCs far from their foes might hear shouts in the distance. As they get closer, they catch glimpses, and then finally see their quarry in full view once they're on the enemies' heels. Think about how the events of the chase affect the environment as well. For instance, if a colossus is chasing after the PCs, after the PCs overcome an obstacle consisting of a cluttered construction site, you could describe how the colossus flattens the structure beneath its feet as it stomps after them.

Visual Aids

It can help your players visualize the chase to use a series of cards or a rough map (such as a large-scale city map rather than a 5-foot grid) to show locations. Use one miniature or token to represent each side of the chase. You might place cards with obstacle names on them face down, revealing them as PCs reach them, and letting a PC peek at an upcoming card if they scout it from a distance.

If the PCs Get Stuck

Sometimes, despite their best efforts, an obstacle will stymie the PCs over and over again. In most cases, after 3 rounds of the PCs struggling with an obstacle that requires the standard number of Chase Points, it's a good idea to just say they found another way around it. If presenting another way around the obstacle just doesn't make sense, such as if the PCs can't hot-wire an abandoned vehicle, you might introduce an NPC or other outside force that can help them bypass it, but at a high cost.

SAMPLE OBSTACLES

You can use the following obstacles in your chases, which are organized by environment. The name is followed by the level of group they're best suited for, and many include both a basic version for lower levels and a higher-level version.

UNDERGROUND OBSTACLES

Crumbling Corridor (1st)	DC 13 Acrobatics to avoid damaging the walls, DC 15 Crafting to repair the walls; **Quaking Corridor (11th)** DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Crafting
Fungal Grotto (1st)	DC 15 Fortitude to endure poisonous spores, DC 13 Survival to avoid fruiting bodies; **Virulent Fungi (5th)** DC 20 Fortitude, DC 18 Survival
Collapsed Tunnel (5th)	DC 20 Athletics to dig through, DC 18 Perception to find another path; **Ancient Collapse (12th)** DC 30 Athletics, DC 28 Perception
Mining Drill (5th)	DC 20 Reflex to dodge the drill, DC 15 Thievery to disable the drill; **Fleet of Drills (12th)** DC 30 Reflex, DC 28 Thievery

URBAN OBSTACLES

Chain Link Fence (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to climb, DC 15 Thievery to unlock the gate; **High Welded Wire Fence (8th)** DC 20 Athletics, DC 25 Thievery
Crowd (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow; **Convention Crowd (4th)** DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Society
Illegally Parked Vehicle (1st)	DC 13 Crafting or Piloting to cut the brakes, DC 15 Intimidation to make the owner move it; **Food Truck (5th)** DC 20 Crafting or Piloting, DC 22 Intimidation
Rickety Fire Escape (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to slide down, DC 13 Athletics to swing from landing to landing; **Crumbling, Steep Fire Escape (5th)** DC 18 Acrobatics, DC 20 Athletics
Security Drone (1st)	DC 14 Computers to reprogram, DC 16 Stealth to sneak past; **Security Robot (9th)** DC 26 Computers, DC 28 Stealth
Viral Flash Mob (2nd)	DC 15 Performance to join in, DC 13 Thievery to disable the sound system; **Viral Surprise Concert (12th)** DC 30 Performance, DC 28 Thievery

VEHICLE OBSTACLES

Confusing Side Streets (1st)	DC 13 Society to recall the street layout, DC 15 Survival to navigate through the tangle; **Twisting Back Alleys (5th)** DC 18 Society, DC 20 Survival
Demonstration (1st)	DC 15 Intimidation to part the crowd, DC 13 Performance to sway the masses; **Parade (5th)** DC 20 Intimidation, DC 18 Performance
Red Light (1st)	DC 13 Computers to hack the lights, DC 15 Piloting to drive through oncoming traffic; **Busy Red Light (11th)** DC 25 Computers, DC 30 Piloting
Spiked Rail (1st)	DC 15 Athletics or Crafting to create an improvised ramp, DC 13 Perception to find a way around; **Blockaded Street (5th)** DC 20 Athletics or Crafting, DC 18 Perception
Traffic Jam (1st)	DC 13 Perception to spot an opening, DC 15 Piloting to swerve through traffic; **Rush Hour (5th)** DC 18 Perception, DC 20 Piloting
Construction Site (2nd)	DC 17 Piloting to swerve through the site, DC 13 Society to understand the site's organization and layout; **Demolition Site (5th)** DC 20 Piloting, DC 18 Society

WILDERNESS OBSTACLES

Deep Mud (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to slog through, DC 13 Perception to find a path; **Horrid Bog (5th)** DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Downpour (1st)	DC 13 Fortitude to push through, DC 15 Nature to predict the weather; **Magical Thunderstorm (11th)** DC 25 Fortitude, DC 30 Nature
Rope Bridge (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to cross carefully, DC 13 Crafting to make repairs; **Solitary Frayed Rope (11th)** DC 30 Acrobatics, DC 25 Crafting
Rushing River (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to swim or hop across stones, DC 13 Survival to find a ford nearby; **Flash Flood (5th)** DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Survival
Tangled Forest (2nd)	DC 17 Perception to find the way, DC 13 Survival to plot a path; **Enchanted Forest (5th)** DC 20 Perception, DC 18 Survival

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INFILTRATION

Not all elements of an adventure can be resolved with a hail of bullets and magical explosions. Sometimes subtlety is required to circumvent foes or accomplish a goal. When the characters need to rely on improvisation and fast thinking to infiltrate an enemy space station or organization to save the day, the infiltration subsystem provides a framework for those adventures.

An infiltration requires the heroes to employ guile and subtlety to achieve one or more objectives without directly confronting their enemies. The PCs' goal might be sneaking into a crime syndicate's warehouse to relieve them of ill-gotten gains, navigating the winding passages of a prison mining colony to free a friend framed for murder, or putting themselves in just the right spot to snatch up the right person or the correct item at just the right time. Whatever the case, the heroes are working to avoid drawing the attention of an opposing party, such as the crime syndicate lookouts, the prison's security robots, or the guests at a celebrity's party. Should the heroes draw too much attention, they might be attacked, arrested, or thrown out–in any case, blocked from accomplishing their goal.

An infiltration is fundamentally a roleplaying activity. The players narrate their characters' actions in response to the situations around them, and the infiltration subsystem provides a framework to measure incremental success within the overall endeavor. An infiltration takes place over the course of multiple rounds, though it's up to you to determine how long a round is. One round might encompass 10 minutes or 1 hour of in-world time, or something completely different, depending on the story and your group's preferences.

BUILDING AN INFILTRATION

When creating an infiltration, you'll want to start with the party's broad goals and an idea of how much time you and your players want to spend. The more complex an infiltration, the longer it will take to play out at the table.

OBJECTIVE

The first thing you'll need to determine is the party's objective, or broad goal. Maybe the PCs need to find their way into a hidden laboratory, locate a particular person within a corporation, rob a bank, or plant a piece of incriminating evidence. An infiltration can consist of a single objective, but a more complex one might include two or more objectives in sequence–the PCs might first need to find a way to enter the corporation's headquarters, then find the starship with the experimental Drift engine, and then escape in the ship before the authorities have a chance to set up a blockade.

To achieve an objective, the PCs must overcome a certain number of obstacles–specific challenges the PCs face, such as maneuvering past a laser sensor grid or persistent paparazzi. For a simple objective, they might need to overcome only one or two obstacles, while a more complex one might require several.

It's a good idea to offer more obstacles as options than the characters need to overcome, and the PCs don't all have to choose the same ones. This represents the fact that there's more than one way into a base and allows PCs to choose obstacles that play to their strengths. It also means you have more options you can adapt if the PCs decide on a truly novel way to tackle their objective.

Once a character has overcome the required number of obstacles to reach the objective, they move on to the next objective. This might mean that some characters move on to a second objective and start making progress toward it while other characters are still completing obstacles from the first objective. When all characters have completed the final objective, the infiltration is a success!

While the characters are pursuing their objectives, however, they need to avoid notice. Awareness Points (AP) measure the extent to which an opposing party is aware of the PCs' actions and apply to the party as a whole. As the PCs' Awareness Points increase, the infiltration becomes more difficult as the opposition shores up its defenses. If the PCs generate too many Awareness Points, they're found out, and their infiltration fails altogether!

OBSTACLES

Each obstacle has certain statistics that define how it works in play. Infiltration Points (IP) represent a character's progress toward overcoming an obstacle. Each obstacle requires gaining a certain number of Infiltration Points to overcome–typically 1 or 2, but some challenging obstacles might require more. PCs can gain Infiltration Points in multiple ways–usually through a skill or Perception check, but sometimes another roll or even the use of a spell or item. These methods are listed in the obstacle's Overcome entry. Unlike obstacles for chases, these use a difficulty range for the PCs' level instead of set DCs.

The Overcome entry also lists whether the PCs need to overcome an object individually or as a group. For individual obstacles, each PC needs to earn the required number of Infiltration Points themself, while for group obstacles, all PCs working toward that obstacle pool their Infiltration Points toward it together. For example, each PC trying to scale a wall needs to earn points on their own, but the PCs could work together to search a storage unit for clues, and once one PC has disabled a lock, everyone can enter.

A particular PC can overcome an individual obstacle only once during an objective; likewise, the party can overcome a group obstacle only once.

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Obstacles in Play

On a character's turn, the character describes what they do to get past the obstacle. They then attempt any required check (or perform the required action, if their choice doesn't require a check). The result of the check determines how many Infiltration Points the character gains toward overcoming that obstacle–or whether they instead raise suspicions and accrue Awareness Points!

Critical Success The PC gains 2 Infiltration Points.
Success The PC gains 1 Infiltration Point.
Failure The PCs accrue 1 Awareness Point.
Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 Awareness Points.

If the character's actions automatically help without requiring a check, like using a spell, they usually gain 1 IP, but you can award 2 for particularly helpful actions.

Sometimes a PC might become stuck on an individual obstacle. Some opportunities (page 220) allow PCs to spend their turn helping others overcome a tricky obstacle.

Pacing

The number of obstacles you require the PCs to overcome for an objective depends partly on the complexity of the infiltration. For shorter infiltrations, use fewer and lower-IP obstacles; for a longer, more complex heist, you can add more obstacles with greater complexity. Also, bear in mind how many checks the PCs will need to attempt to complete their obstacles. An objective with mostly low-IP group obstacles will move quickly because only a few rolls are required, compared to one with mostly individual obstacles that each PC needs to roll separately for.

Sample Obstacles

The following examples can be used directly in many infiltrations, or as inspiration for your own creations. You can also use the sample chase obstacles on page 217 as starting points.

LOCKED DOOR — OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Athletics, Computers, or Thievery

A locked door separates the heroes from their target.

SECURITY CHECKPOINT — OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (individual); **Overcome** standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Diplomacy, or Stealth

Security officers cluster at a checkpoint, alert for unusual activity.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA — OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (group); **Overcome** standard or hard Acrobatics, Computers, or Stealth

A live camera monitored by security guards is looking out for suspicious activity.

TRAP — OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Thievery

A trap bars the characters' passage. This obstacle follows the normal degrees of success for an obstacle, with the following modification for critical failure.

Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 AP as normal, and the PC who critically fails the Thievery check also triggers the trap.

SETTING INFILTRATION SKILLS AND DCS

Many of the sample infiltration activities and events give a DC range instead of a fixed DC. Set the DCs based on the standard DC of the party level using the table on page 53, and adjust them using the DC Adjustments on page 53. When given a range of skills for an activity or event, you should vary the difficulty based on the needs of the story. For instance, if a PC is Scouting a Location, you might want to use a low DC for Stealth (because it's easier to scout when unnoticed), a hard one for Perception (because while the PC might see the enemy, the enemy might also see them), and a very hard DC for Society (because walking in like you belong is difficult if you don't have an invitation or the right uniform). This not only adds a certain degree of plausibility, but by planning for and allowing a broad range of skills as a means to complete the activity, you also become better prepared for when your players improvise.

AWARENESS POINTS

The trick to any infiltration is to get it done before anyone notices. Awareness Points measure the opposition's awareness of the PCs' efforts, helping you keep the pressure on and ramp up the urgency. While Infiltration Points are specific to a given obstacle, Awareness Points are a single pool spanning the entire infiltration and all participants.

Awareness Points increase in three different ways. When a PC fails a check to overcome an obstacle, they incur 1 Awareness Point (or 2 on a critical failure). Other failed checks during the infiltration typically don't increase the Awareness Point total unless the failure would reasonably cause a disruption. Awareness Points also increase by 1 at the end of each round of the infiltration, as the passage of time makes it more likely that the PCs will be discovered. Finally, the PCs earn Awareness Points whenever their activities are disruptive enough to draw attention to the infiltration, subject to GM discretion.

The effects of Awareness Points occur when the PCs reach certain thresholds. The specific effects and thresholds are up to you and your story, but typically for every 5 AP the PCs accrue, the challenges become harder, and if the PCs accrue enough Awareness Points (usually equal to twice the number of Infiltration Points necessary for the party as a whole to overcome all necessary obstacles), the infiltration fails.

Each threshold should have an effect. It might increase the DCs for obstacles, introduce a complication, spark a combat encounter, or have other effects. Reaching the highest tier of Awareness Points means that the PCs fail, but that doesn't have

to be the end of the story! Failed infiltrations are an opportunity to introduce new challenges and move the story forward in a different way.

This basic Awareness Point scheme for an infiltration requiring the PCs to earn 10 IP can be used as is or tailored to your game.

5 Awareness Points: Suspicions are raised. Increase the DCs for obstacles by 1. The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

10 Awareness Points: The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

15 Awareness Points: Increase the DCs for obstacles by a total of 2, and the first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

20 Awareness Points: The infiltration fails.

COMPLICATIONS

Sometimes, when a plan goes sour and seems like it can't get worse, it does. Complications are unexpected problems that compound the difficulty of a challenge. The party might trigger a complication by critically failing a check to overcome a challenge, by reaching a certain threshold of Awareness Points, if you need to spice up the infiltration, or through their own decisions—maybe the supernatural research station is protected by several magical wards, each triggering different traps when a PC attempts to use a different kind of magic.

Many complications increase Awareness Points or otherwise make infiltration more difficult. A common form of complication is attracting the attention of security guards or robots who try to stop, capture, or even kill the PCs. When this happens, the infiltration might briefly shift into encounter mode as the PCs attempt to defeat their assailants. The sounds of battle are loud, and guards often have ways to trigger alarms or call for backup, so unless combat occurs in an isolated area or the PCs take precautions, each round of unmitigated combat causes them to gain Awareness Points, at the very least.

Each complication has a trigger that determines when it occurs. It might affect only a single character, or it might affect everyone in a certain area, and you'll need to determine whether multiple PCs can work together to overcome it or whether only one can. Complications must be overcome before the characters involved can overcome other obstacles, and attempting to overcome a complication takes a character's turn just like trying to overcome an obstacle. Many complications are one-off events and are overcome automatically, even on a failure, though not without a cost. If a complication requires PCs to gain Infiltration Points to clear it, it has an Infiltration Points entry, just like an obstacle.

Don't overwhelm the characters with complications. Typically, you'll want to aim for two complications per AP threshold. Otherwise, the PCs might end up spending more time on the complications than on the infiltration itself, and the chance of failure might be too high.

The following example is a common complication that could occur in almost any infiltration.

SUBMIT IDENTIFICATION — COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs reach 5 Awareness Points for the first time.

Overcome standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Computers, Crafting, or Stealth

A security drone confronts the party and demands to see their credentials before asking them to vacate the area.

Success You use fake credentials or convince the drone you're leaving.

Failure You're caught in the act, security is notified of your presence, and the party accrues 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure, but the party accrues 2 AP.

OPPORTUNITIES

Not everything that happens during an infiltration is a challenge that must be solved—sometimes PCs can use their turns to aid the group in some way. Opportunities are very similar to obstacles, but they don't provide Infiltration Points or count toward the objective. They instead provide some kind of benefit, such as a password to disable security features further along, reducing the party's Awareness Points, or lowering the DC for a later challenge. But opportunities sometimes come with risks—failing can increase the PCs' Awareness Points or trigger complications. You'll need to decide what opportunities are available and when, and whether they can be completed multiple times or only once. For example, the PCs can steal the CEO's keycard only once but can cause a distraction several times.

Some opportunities might be available at almost any time in any infiltration, like this example.

SMOOTH THE PATH — OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The PC has successfully completed an individual objective, and some other PCs haven't.

Having completed your objective, you help an ally who's still trying to reach that goal. Describe how you're helping. This gives the ally the benefits of Following the Expert (*Player Core* 431). In unusual cases, the GM might allow you to attempt a relevant skill check to overcome the obstacle on behalf of the other PC instead.

PC PREPARATIONS

Sometimes the party has a chance to prepare before conducting their infiltration, by scouting a location, bribing officials, and so on. This takes the form of special downtime activities that can give the PCs Edge Points (EP): resources and advantages they can bring to bear during their infiltration, such as stolen uniforms, hacked credentials, and the like. As with infiltration opportunities, careless work runs the risk of increasing Awareness Points—but in this case, before the infiltration even begins!

Typically, you'll limit the preparation phase in some way, such as by setting a number of days the PCs have to prepare and by constraining how many preparation activities are available to make sure the PCs aren't entering the infiltration with so many Edge Points that the infiltration is no longer suspenseful. The more opportunities for Edge Points you give, the lower you should set the Awareness Point thresholds for complications and failure. Also decide how many times the characters can benefit from each preparation activity—most activities should grant their benefits only once.

You can use the activities below for your infiltration by adjusting the details, but you should also create custom activities that link directly to your story.

EDGE POINTS

Edge Points (EP) represent advantages the party gains by planning, quick thinking, an ally's intervention, or some other benefit. When a PC fails or critically fails a check to overcome an obstacle or a complication, they can spend an Edge Point to succeed instead. Some Edge Points can be spent only during particular circumstances—for instance, even if you avoid the security robots' patrols, that won't help you unlock a door—so consider using unique tokens to represent such Edge Points.

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

BRIBE CONTACT

DOWNTIME | SECRET

Cost A bribe worth at least one-tenth of the Currency per Additional PC listed on Party Treasure by Level (page 59). Doubling this amount grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the check.

Requirements You've successfully Gained a Contact (see below).

You offer a bribe to your contact to help the heist in some way. Attempt a hard or very hard Deception or Diplomacy check.

Success The contact accepts the bribe, and you gain 1 EP.

Failure You believe you successfully Bribed your Contact and gained 1 EP, but in fact the contact informs the opposition of the attempted bribery, adding 1 AP to the infiltration. The GM can reveal that this Edge Point grants no benefit at any point during the infiltration, as befits the story.

Critical Failure As failure, but adding 2 AP to the infiltration.

FORGE CREDENTIALS

DOWNTIME | SECRET

You prepare a fake ID, license, or other credential that might serve as a convincing prop. Attempt a hard or very hard Society check or a very hard Computers check.

Success You create convincing credentials and gain 1 EP you can use only when presenting some form of credential or form of identification.

Failure Your phony credentials have a glaring problem. You gain 1 EP that (unknown to you) grants no benefit when used.

Critical Failure As failure, but a PC who tries to use the Edge Point gets a critical failure, even if they use the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

GAIN CONTACT

DOWNTIME

You try to make contact with an individual who can aid you in the infiltration. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Diplomacy or Society check, or a normal or hard check using a Lore skill appropriate to your prospective contact.

Success You make contact and gain 1 EP.

Failure You fail to make contact.

Critical Failure You insult or spook the contact in some way. Future attempts take a –2 circumstance penalty.

Special Multiple critical failures might cause the contact to work against the PCs in some way, likely increasing the party's Awareness Points.

GOSSIP

DOWNTIME | SECRET

You seek out rumors about the infiltration's target. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Diplomacy check.

Critical Success You gain inside information about the location or group you're trying to infiltrate. This grants you a +2 circumstance bonus to future checks you attempt for preparation activities for this infiltration. If you share this information, those you share it with also gain this bonus.

Success You gain inside information about the place or group you're attempting to infiltrate that aids your planning.

Failure You learn nothing.

Critical Failure You hear a few mistaken rumors and take a –2 circumstance penalty to your next check for a preparation activity. Word spreads around that you're asking after that group or individual, increasing your Awareness Points by 1.

SCOUT LOCATION

DOWNTIME | SECRET

You spend time observing the place or group you wish to infiltrate. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Perception, Society or Stealth check.

Success You make observations that provide 1 EP.

Failure You learn nothing particularly noteworthy.

Critical Failure You misjudge some aspect of what you observed, gaining 1 EP that results in a critical failure instead of a success when used, even if a PC uses the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

SEARCH INFOSPHERE

DOWNTIME | SECRET

You search digitally for any information about the infiltration's target. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Computers check.

Critical Success You find rare information and gain 1 EP that requires the use of a tech item. If you share this information, anyone you share it with can use that EP (but once used by anyone, it's no longer useful).

Success As critical success, except the information is so well-known that attempting to use it might arouse suspicion and adds 1 AP to the infiltration.

Failure As success, except the information is exaggerated, outdated, or just wrong, and the EP grants no benefit to the infiltration, which can be revealed by the GM at any point during the infiltration, as befits the story.

Critical Failure As failure, but adding 2 AP to the infiltration.

SECURE DISGUISES

DOWNTIME

You seek to procure or create disguises. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Crafting, Deception, Performance, or Society check.

Success You procure or creates disguises, gaining 1 EP that can be used only to maintain a cover identity.

Failure Your efforts result in an unusable disguise.

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HACKING

A computer is only as secure as its weakest vulnerability; every computer has a terminal, and every terminal is another weakness. The hacking subsystem provides a framework for accessing computers using the versatile skill set of an entire party.

The hacking subsystem enables PCs to gain access to and control secure computers. PCs work together to discover and exploit a computer's vulnerabilities in order to help bypass the system's security without triggering its countermeasures. Using the hacking subsystem, characters who are untrained in Computers can help using magic, social skills, and more. There are two kinds of hacking encounters: simple and complex.

Simple hacking is quick, streamlined, and functions like a simple hazard. Simple computers have one access point and no vulnerabilities. Hacking a simple computer or Disabling the computer's countermeasures is a two-action activity. If the PCs have the time to gain access to a simple computer without the pressure of an accompanying encounter, you can allow the PCs up to two additional failures before triggering the computer's countermeasures. Alternatively, you can use the guidelines for building a computer (page 223) to introduce a custom vulnerability or otherwise modify a simple computer, but adding more than one vulnerability runs the risk of making it a complex encounter that takes much more time to hack!

Complex hacking occurs over multiple rounds that might last a variable amount of time. During each round of a complex hacking encounter, each PC can act once, attempting to either exploit vulnerabilities, notice and disable countermeasures, or Hack one of the computer's points of access. Each time a character successfully exploits an access point's vulnerability, the DC to Hack the associated access point is lowered by the indicated value. If a character fails to Disable the access point's countermeasures or fails to Hack an access point, they accrue one failure (two on a critical failure) for that access point. Each access point has one or more countermeasures that trigger when a group accrues enough failures. Characters in the same group can act in whatever order they prefer, each taking a turn. Usually, the character attempting to Hack the computer will go last, giving the rest of the party an opportunity to disable the computer's countermeasures and lower the DC by exploiting vulnerabilities. While a group of hackers might be tempted to take their time and explore every avenue before attempting to Hack a computer, doing so is risky! During each round the PCs attempt to exploit one or more vulnerabilities, but don't attempt to Hack an access point or disable a countermeasure, they accrue one failure for an associated access point.

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BUILDING A COMPUTER

Every hacker needs a computer to hack! The form a computer takes can vary greatly, from a secure technological database accessed via a holographic interface to an interdimensional tree that grows across realities and stores its data inside colorful, intangible fruits accessible only through lucid dreaming. While incredibly different and bound to sport unique vulnerabilities and countermeasures, both are computers for the purpose of the hacking subsystem.

CONCEPT

The first step to building a computer is to develop an initial concept. What does accessing the computer allow your players to accomplish? What level is it? Is it simple or complex? Is it magical, technological, or hybrid? Does it have a virtual intelligence, or is it a living creature? Does it use remote access points, or does it require direct physical access? You should brainstorm the computer's name and description, as that can help you plan its vulnerabilities and countermeasures.

COMPUTER TYPES

Most computers have the tech trait and can be hacked using skills like Computers, Crafting, and Thievery. Magic computers might incorporate programmable *aeon stones* or bound machine spirits that command ancient constructs and are usually Hacked using Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion. Hybrid computers have the tech and magic traits, such as a password-protected *spell chip* or an arcane barrier controlled by a console. Hybrid computers often have different access points for their magical and technological components, but Hacking either should grant access to the computer. A computer's stat block will never be able to list every possible skill a character might use during a hacking encounter. You can use the values listed in a computer's stat block as a guideline to resolve creative, unlisted solutions to a hacking encounter.

SETTING THE STATISTICS

Use a hazard's Stealth and Disable DCs (page 113) to determine the computer's DCs. Successfully exploiting vulnerabilities with a low DC should reduce the DC to Hack by 1, those with a high DC should reduce it by 2, and those with an elite DC by 3. Penalties to the Hacking DC incurred while exploiting a vulnerability are cumulative and should never be enough to reduce the DC below the low DC. The DC to notice a countermeasure is usually lower than the DC to disable it, which is always high or elite.

SIMPLIFIED QUICK HACKING

For a simplified quick hacking encounter, you can ask each of your players to roll appropriate skill checks to support the character(s) attempting the Hacking check. Each successful skill check lowers the Hacking DC by 1, or 2 on a critical success; a critical failure raises the Hacking DC by 1 instead.

COMPUTER STAT BLOCKS

A computer's stat block is only necessary when hacking the computer is the primary obstacle. As many vulnerabilities and access points can take several minutes to bypass, consider using a single access point with no vulnerabilities or additional success benefits if your players are Hacking during an encounter. You can use this simplified method to allow players to Hack a basic computer with a complete stat block to perform simple commands, such as unlocking a door, but doing so shouldn't award XP or additional success benefits, and an additional check should be required for each subsequent command.

COMPUTER'S NAME **COMPUTER LEVEL**

TRAITS

This provides information about the computer and its purpose.

Access Point Each access point should be noted as physical (if it requires the character to be physically adjacent) or remote (if it can be accessed from a distance). This is followed by the number of successes required to Hack the access point. The DC of skill checks that can be attempted to use the access point are listed here, followed by the minimum proficiency rank required for the skills (if any) in parentheses. Each access point is associated with its own unique vulnerabilities and countermeasures. If a computer has multiple access points, these access points (and their associated vulnerabilities and countermeasures) are listed separately.



Vulnerabilities Each vulnerability lists in parentheses the DC of any skill checks that can be attempted to exploit it, followed by a value of how much it lowers the access point's DC. Some computers don't have this entry.

Countermeasures Lists the nature of the countermeasures that trigger after reaching the number of failures in the parentheses; the DC of any skill checks required to notice and disable the countermeasures are also here. Some countermeasures have the persistent trait, meaning once they've been triggered, they automatically trigger again at the end of each ensuing round. Persistent countermeasures can be disabled even after they've been triggered, and doing so prevents them from triggering again (but doesn't erase the effects of previous triggers).

Critical Success This additional bonus is earned if a character achieves a number of successes equal to two times more than is necessary to Hack an access point, or if more than one access point is successfully Hacked. While this is most common for access points that only require one success, it can also happen when multiple characters attempt to Hack a computer at the same time. Some computers don't have this entry.

Success The basic computer functions and benefits available when the characters successfully Hack this computer.

SAMPLE STAT BLOCKS

In the simple computer example, an *aeon stone* taken from a defeated guard can be used to control security in an Azlanti prison. In the lower-level complex computer example, the PCs need to learn about Zo!'s unannounced show, either by hacking into the Zo! media server directly or by trying to steal his comm unit to get the information using his personal device. In the higher-level complex computer example, the PCs are trying to identify a contact using data from an AbadarCorp server.

RUBY SPHERE AEON STONE — COMPUTER 2

SIMPLE | MAGIC

This spherical crystal is programmed to function as a computer and comm unit for a guard in an Azlanti prison.

Attune Crystal (physical; 1 Success) DC 15 Arcane, Nature, Occultism, or Religion (trained)

Countermeasures (2 Failures) You think you've succeeded, but attempting to use the improperly attuned crystal activates an alarm; **Notice** DC 15 Crafting or Perception; **Disable** DC 16 Stealth or Thievery

Success You attune to the crystal and can use it to control the doors, sentry turrets, and alarms inside the prison.

ZO! MEDIA SERVER — COMPUTER 4

COMPLEX | TECH

This server contains unreleased information and trailers on upcoming Zo! Media shows. Zo! has total access via his personal comm unit, which can be physically stolen or digitally cloned.

Zo!'s Personal Account (physical; 1 Success) DC 25 Computers (trained)

Vulnerabilities Deduce username (DC 18 Performance or Society; –1); call assistant for password (DC 22 Deception or Diplomacy; –2); clone or steal comm unit (DC 25 Crafting or Thievery; –3)

Countermeasures (2 Failures) The account is blocked, and Zo's Personal Account can't be used; **Notice** DC 16 Computers or Perception; **Disable** DC 22 Deception or Intimidation

Unpatched Backdoor (remote; 2 Successes) DC 22 Computers (trained)

Vulnerabilities Program script or find Zo! fan to program (DC 22 Computers or Society; –2); bribe or threaten server admin (DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidation; –3)

Countermeasures (3 Failures) The information is deleted, resulting in no benefit for Success; **Notice** DC 20 Crafting; **Disable** DC 24 Computers or Crafting

Critical Success You gain access to all production schedules, financials, and personnel files, giving you a +2 circumstance bonus to Deception checks to Impersonate, Intimidation checks to Coerce, and Survival checks to Track a Zo! media employee for 1 week.

Success You get access to Zo!'s schedule for the next week, which features a number of planned tapings with a series title that has been blacked out.

ABADARCORP CUSTOMER ACCOUNT — COMPUTER 13

COMPLEX | TECH

Information on your target is stored in their AbadarCorp account on a satellite-based server that stores sensitive customer account information in encrypted form.

Target's Personal Account (remote; 1 Success) DC 40 Computers (trained)

Vulnerabilities Deduce username (DC 30 Absalom Station Lore or DC 32 Society; –1); call customer service for password reset (DC 34 Deception or Diplomacy; –2); keylogger hidden in a media file (DC 34 Performance or DC 37 Computers; –3)

Countermeasures (2 Failures) The account is locked until you verify your identity using a comm unit; **Notice** DC 18 Perception; **Disable** DC 30 Underworld Lore, DC 34 Thievery, or DC 36 Computers

(3 Failures) The account is blocked until the target goes to an AbadarCorp facility in person, and no further checks to Hack can be attempted on this access point; **Notice** DC 25 Computers or Perception; **Disable** DC 38 Computers or Deception

Cross-Site Attack (remote; 2 Successes) DC 38 Computers (trained)

Vulnerabilities Fake credentials (DC 34 Corporate Lore or DC 36 Deception; –2); spoof a security alert (DC 34 Computers or DC 36 Deception or Intimidation; –2);

Countermeasures (2 Failures; persistent) You fall for a counter-scam and lose 500 credits; **Notice** DC 28 Computers; **Disable** DC 36 Thievery or DC 40 Computers

Critical Success As success, but you also gain the user's encrypted payment information, allowing you make a purchase over the infosphere of up to 25,000 credits without the system flagging it until after your order has been delivered.

Success You gain access to customer information, including names, orders, and addresses.

SAMPLE VULNERABILITIES AND COUNTERMEASURES

Below are several vulnerabilities PCs might be able to exploit and countermeasures they might face while attempting to hack. These entries could appear on computers of any level and thus don't use specific DCs; they should instead be considered as potential options when building a computer to hack.

Vulnerabilities

- Deduce username or password (Perception, Society, or Lore relevant to target)
- Call customer service for access (Deception or Diplomacy)
- Steal or spoof two-factor authentication device (Crafting or Thievery)
- Program keylogger in music file (Computers or Performance)
- Find traces of another hacker you can convince to give you access (Diplomacy or Society)
- Survey outside server farm to find buried cable (Nature or Survival)
- Use divination to determine a user's password (Occultism or Religion)
- Bribe or threaten server administrator (Diplomacy or Intimidation)
- Physically retrieve the data from an autopilot module mounted on the roof of a gravtrain (Acrobatics or Piloting)
- Create a fake site to phish for a password (Computers or Society)
- Phreak the target's server with a whistle (Crafting or Performance)
- Pretend to be an investor, a partner, or a regulator (Deception or Lore relevant to target)
- Denial-of-service attack (Computers standard; Diplomacy or Performance to rally other hackers to your aid)
- Cast a ritual to access magitech components (Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion)
- Jury-rig electromagnetic winch to wipe back-up server (Crafting or Piloting)
- Join cleaning crew to gain access to building where server is kept (Deception or Society)
- Steal comm unit from employee on lunch break (Stealth or Thievery)
- Scale communication tower for physical access to cables (Acrobatics or Athletics)
- Fake fingerprint authentication (Deception or Medicine)
- Play a challenging vidgame to discover a hidden zone and retrieve a backup of the data (Piloting or Vidgame Lore)

Countermeasures

- A system admin bans or locks the account; **Notice** Computers or Perception; **Disable** Deception or Intimidation
- You think you've succeeded but instead find misleading information or attract authorities; **Notice** Computers, Crafting, or Perception; **Disable** Stealth or Thievery
- The folders are a mess, and files are being deleted quickly; **Notice** Society or Survival; **Disable** Computers or Crafting
- The account is locked until you get a dongle or comm unit to authorize access; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Crafting, Thievery, or related Lore
- An admin notices your attempts and blocks your access; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Computers, Diplomacy, or Intimidation
- A security guard in your physical location notices you and asks for your identification; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Deception or Stealth
- A Hellknight hacker notices your infosphere vigilantism and attempts to track down your location; **Notice** Society; **Disable** Stealth or Survival
- An administrator catches the strange network activity and threatens to report you; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation
- The computer contracts a magitech virus that flashes hypnotic visuals to confuse you; **Notice** Arcana or Occultism; **Disable** Arcana, Occultism, or Will save
- The computer begins sprouting plants as a First World viral curse takes hold; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Nature or Survival
- An EMP takes out the entire database; **Notice** Perception; **Disable** Athletics or Thievery

ADDITIONAL REWARDS

While the hacking subsystem enhances an existing adventure, countermeasures can provide fertile ground for future encounters and threats, which makes hacking riskier than most subsystems. With greater risk comes greater reward! You can even use the hacking subsystem to supplement a character's income. Depending on the ethics of your party and the nature of the target, hackers could potentially drain funds from a credstick plugged into a hacked device, route funds from an account into a burner credstick, steal or counterfeit credentials, or transfer proprietary vidgame items onto their own devices. Information found on a computer could be extremely valuable to the right client, and might contain corporate secrets, evidence of a crime, secret magic rituals or crafting formulas, or military intelligence. You should give hints to your players when they discover these additional rewards that someone might find them valuable; perhaps allow them to Recall Knowledge checks on the spot, knowing that even if they fail, they might run into an interested contact in the future. If you're worried that these leads might slow down the game, you can make it more obvious by including the price and contact information of a potential buyer in another file on the computer.



CINEMATIC STARSHIP SCENES

Blasting off into space requires a starship, and traveling space can be both dangerous and full of exciting encounters. Cinematic starship scenes thrust the PCs right into the action, setting up chases, bombastic skirmishes, dramatic dogfights, boarding an enemy ship, and more.

Cinematic starship scenes occur in encounter mode and require the PCs to work together onboard a starship by taking on different roles. Starship scenes often involve combat between two or more starships, but they might present a unique challenge like a high-speed chase against enemy starships through an asteroid field, or a scientific mission to scan a planet before a black hole consumes it. Cinematic starship scenes often incorporate magic, such as a friendly race with spectra in the Drift.

Cinematic starship scenes are similar to a complex hazard (page 109) but are presented as a new type of stat block that also includes details for the PCs' starship, threats (including enemy starships, dangerous creatures, hazardous terrain, gravity wells, and more), and victory conditions for the encounter.

RUNNING CINEMATIC STARSHIP SCENES

A cinematic starship scene runs like most encounters, with players rolling initiative for their characters based on how their characters entered the scene and taking individual turns in that order during each round. Prior to the start of a cinematic starship scene, each player selects one of the starship roles their character occupies, which determines the skill they roll for initiative. Someone acting as a pilot is likely to roll Piloting for initiative, while a science officer might roll Computers or Perception. Remember that each PC might receive a bonus to their rolls based on the Starship Bonuses available!

At the beginning of a round, each starship role becomes available, as determined by the scene. At the start of a PC's turn, they select an available role to occupy, maintaining that role until the beginning of the next round. This means a PC who acted as pilot in the previous round could act as captain in the following round, as long as the role is currently available and unoccupied. Some roles can be occupied by multiple PCs, such as a ship that has two gunners or even two science officers. The available roles and the number of characters who can occupy each role are noted in the scene.

Based on the role a PC selects, they have one or more special actions they can use on their turn. This might represent a special piloting maneuver to try to escape the threat, a counterhacking

endeavor the science officer might need to commit to, a magical ritual necessary to close a nearby rift into Hell, or even a simple firing of the ship's laser cannon at a foe! As usual, PCs have 3 actions during their turn, which they'll use to perform special actions granted by their role or other actions of their choice. As most starship actions require 2 actions to use, each PC is likely to have a single action to spare on their turn, which might include a PC preparing to Aid an ally, a spellcaster casting *guidance* to improve their odds of success on a skill check, or a PC taking a shot at an enemy boarder invading the bridge.

Unlike the PCs onboard their starship, who are the stars of the show and guide the story with their choices, the threats in a cinematic starship scene operate using preset routines—though some scenes might provide variations on a routine to keep the PCs on their toes! Enemy starships involved in the scene perform routines and don't perform crew actions.

CINEMATIC STARSHIP SCENE XP

Characters gain Experience Points (XP) for encountering a cinematic starship scene, whether they succeed or not. The scene's level indicates what level of party the scene is a good challenge for. The XP values for a cinematic starship scene are equal to the XP for a monster or complex hazard of the same level. To best challenge your players, you should aim to design scenes that range in difficulty from the party's level – 1 to the party's level + 1. Scenes of a lower level than the party's level – 4 are beyond trivial and award no XP.

You can also grant the PCs additional XP as a story award for succeeding at a scene's victory conditions, doubling the Victory Points threshold for a victory condition, completing additional objectives, achieving an important story milestone, or even coming up with creative solutions.

CINEMATIC STARSHIP SCENE XP

Level	XP
Party level – 4	10 XP
Party level – 3	15 XP
Party level – 2	20 XP
Party level – 1	30 XP
Party level	40 XP
Party level + 1	60 XP
Party level + 2	80 XP
Party level + 3	100 XP
Party level + 4	120 XP

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are a few situations that might occur in cinematic starship scenes that are different from normal encounters.

Balancing for More Crew: Most encounters, including those in printed adventures, assume a baseline number of four PCs acting onboard a starship. Sometimes a scene might include a friendly NPC and their presence is balanced for in the encounter. When accounting for additional PCs beyond four, it's important to look at the number of successes required for any associated Victory Points system at play as well as the potential output of enemy starships. Generally, the number of gunners available on the PCs' starship accounts for damage output, so adding more PCs won't necessarily increase damage output, but instead provide the PCs with more options on how to complete the encounter or better their chances with other checks.

CINEMATIC VS. TACTICAL

The rules presented in this section are intended to get the PCs right into the action with their characters, rather than taking the time to learn a new subsystem the players might not have encountered before. These scenes should represent what happens when the PCs have a predetermined starship that they use in an encounter. Expanded starship encounter rules, including having an upgradeable party starship and rules for more extensive tactical combat, are detailed in *Starfinder Tech Core*.

Character Abilities: Some characters might have special abilities, such as feats or spells, they can use during a cinematic starship scene. Core class abilities, like Aim for an operative or Suppressing Fire for a soldier, aren't intended for cinematic starship scenes. Most applications for feats and spells are left up to the GM's discretion for what's appropriate to the specific encounter but generally should veer on the more permissive side when it makes sense. Spells might be usable on a PC's turn, with some single-action enhancement spells like *guidance* fitting exceptionally well into the action economy a character receives during their turn. Similarly, a GM might provide a bonus or reward for casting particularly powerful spells, like *phantasmal fleet*, instead of taking a bespoke starship action on their turn. Remember, the goal is for every player to have fun playing the characters they created.

Conditions on Starships: Sometimes, the PCs' starship might gain a condition or similar negative effect that has a timing element. In most cases, these conditions last for a specified duration; however, persistent damage requires a slight adjustment as it shouldn't trigger on each player's turn, as the damage affects the starship and not the PCs. Instead, resolve persistent damage on a starship at the end of each round, having one PC roll the flat check to recover. A PC occupying the engineer role can spend 2 actions on their turn to perform Assisted Recovery on their starship, reducing the flat check's DC to 10. This allows the engineer to attempt an extra flat check to end the persistent damage immediately, but only once per round. This is a replacement for the normal Assisted Recovery rules (*Player Core* 438).

Weapon Ranges: For simplicity of running these encounters, there are no range increments for starship attacks in cinematic starship scenes. This keeps things simple and avoids the need for the encounter to have a tactical map. There might be a special action that allows a pilot to line up a better shot or move the starship further out of range to make hitting it more difficult. When accounting for the effects of character actions, such as spells, the distance between starships is up

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to the GM's discretion but generally should be assumed to be at least several hundred feet apart unless the pilot takes a special action to safely maneuver close to the other starship.

SCENE FORMAT

Rather than individual stat blocks for different elements within a scene, starship scenes are presented as one large stat block for you to reference. These scene stat blocks are broken down into pertinent information, going on to describe information about the encounter and how to win it, the PCs' starship, specific threats found within the encounter, and finally an explanation on how the encounter is assumed to end. These scenes can be exceptionally large stat blocks depending on the overall theme of the encounter and, depending on complexity, can take the same time as running a complex encounter in encounter mode.

SCENE NAME **SCENE (LEVEL)**

TRAITS

An overall description of the overall encounter.

Victory Conditions Explanation of how the PCs succeed or measure success during the encounter. This might include options like reducing one or more threats to 0 Hit Points, obtaining a certain number of Victory Points, or that the encounter ends after a set number of rounds.

Additional Objectives Explanation of any optional objectives the PCs can attempt to accomplish, including information on how these objectives are accomplished. Most cinematic starship scenes don't include additional objectives, and additional objectives never contribute to a scene's victory conditions or end the encounter.

Starship Description Details about the PCs' starship, including notable components.

Available Roles A list of the roles that PCs can occupy on the starship. A PC determines their role at the start of their turn, but the crew of any given starship can never take more actions with the associated role trait than the number of roles listed here.

Starship Bonuses Core numerical details about the PCs' starship, including any relevant skill bonuses or notable information that could affect PCs or the encounter.

AC the PCs' starship AC; **Saving Throws** the PCs' starship saves

Shields the PCs' starship shields with a parenthetical on how many it regains at the start of each round; **HP** the PCs' starship Hit Points. If this is reduced to 0, then the starship is disabled.

Starship Actions Specific actions the PCs can take in their starship during the encounter. Some actions, particularly Strikes, will specify a proficiency necessary.

Threat Name A description of the threat, such as enemy starships or dangerous environmental effects.

Initiative The specific skill the threat uses to roll its initiative along with appropriate bonus.

Skills the threat's skills, if any

AC the threat's AC, if any; **Saving Throws** the threat's saves, if any

Shields the threat's shields with a parenthetical on how many it regains at the start of each round, if any; **HP** the threat's Hit Points, if any; **Immunities** the threat's immunities, if any; **Weaknesses** the threat's weaknesses, if any; **Resistances** the threat's resistances, if any

Special Abilities Abilities that occur outside of the threat's regular routine.

Threat Routine (number of actions) This entry describes what the threat does on each of its turns during an encounter; the number in parentheses indicates how many actions the threat can use each turn.

Threat Action Any action the threat can use appears here.

Additional Threats You can include multiple threats in a cinematic starship encounter; each should include the same information as detailed above.

Ending the Encounter Specifics on how the encounter can end. This is separate from victory conditions, as an encounter might end before the PCs achieve a victory condition, or the PCs might only be partway to complete victory when an encounter ends.

BUILDING STARSHIP SCENES

Every scene starts with a vision: what exactly are the PCs doing inside of a starship? Are they battling an enemy starship in the atmosphere of a planet or attempting to escape the jaws of some predatory interstellar megafauna before becoming trapped inside? Designing these encounters should always begin with a basic concept of what situation the PCs will be part of, how to overcome the scene, and how the scene ultimately concludes.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Along with the details on the PCs' starship (page 229) and the threats relevant to the encounter, there are two notable elements of a cinematic starship scene: the victory conditions and ending the encounter.

Victory conditions represent the ways in which the PCs overcome the encounter and measure their success. This might include something as simple as "destroy the Corpse Fleet starship" with that starship being one of the threats in the encounter. There might also be an objective of "escape the asteroid field by gaining 5 or more Escape Points," which can be earned by actions the PCs take during the encounter. Some scenes might even provide the PCs with multiple means of achieving victory, such as combining the idea of a Corpse Fleet vessel attacking the PCs inside an asteroid field—the PCs might win the encounter by either of the two options listed above!

Ending a starship scene can be determined by a variety of factors. It might be timed based on a number of rounds that pass, until the PCs or one or more threats are disabled, or when the PCs (or a threat) achieve a certain threshold of successes on relevant checks.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

Some scenes include additional, optional objectives the PCs can accomplish during the encounter. This might include performing daring maneuvers during a widely broadcast starship race or obtaining additional (but not integral) information on a stellar anomaly or a new model

of enemy warships. Accomplishing these optional objectives doesn't contribute to the scene's victory conditions or end the encounter but is likely to earn the PCs additional story awards, information, or other narrative advantages beyond the scene.



Nova Rush, Iconic Starship

PLAYER STARSHIPS

The first element of designing a starship encounter is to determine the appropriate statistics for the PCs' starship.

Available Roles: Each starship the PCs operate has several different starship roles PCs can occupy. This typically includes captain, engineer, gunner, magic officer, pilot, and science officer. Not every starship in a starship scene has every role available; a smaller shuttle might not benefit from a specialized captain, while an organic space whale might not benefit from a mechanical engineer. Generally, there should be at least four roles available (the average assumed party size in Starfinder) with a potential for up to six to eight to allow for allies or other NPCs to contribute. Some starship scenes have entirely unique roles a PC can occupy with niche applications.

Starship Bonuses: Different starships might provide different bonuses to skills that the PCs can utilize during a cinematic starship scene. A high-speed fighter might provide a bonus to Piloting, while a scientific research vessel might provide a bonus to Computers checks. This area compiles the bonuses and details them. They should be treated as item bonuses to the relevant skills, though there might be situations where a different bonus is applied, and that can be indicated in a parenthetical. Skill bonuses provided here should match skills required for the scene, whether as part of starship actions (see below) or in response to the actions of threats.

AC: The effective Armor Class of the PCs' starship in the encounter, representing how difficult it is to hit. You can use the AC presented on the Armor Class table in Building Creatures (page 122), selecting the extreme, high, moderate, or low value depending on the type of starship the PCs use in the encounter. A lower AC should correspond to the PCs' starship having higher Hit Points and Shields.

Saving Throws: The saving throws associated with a PCs' starship. This will generally only include Fortitude and Reflex saves, though sometimes a Will save might appear if the PCs are piloting a living creature like an oma or a starship with a sentient intelligence that's susceptible to mental effects. You can use the saves presented on the Saving Throw table in Building Creatures (page 122), selecting the extreme, high, moderate or low value depending on the type of starship the PCs use in the encounter.

Hit Points & Shields: The Hit Points of a starship represent the physical damage it can take, while Shields are akin to temporary Hit Points that regenerate at the start of every round. You can use the Hit Points presented on the Hit Points table in Building Creatures (page 123), selecting the high, moderate or low value depending on the type of starship the PCs use in the encounter. You'll generally want the PCs' starship to have at least moderate Hit Points. For shields, the value should match the maximum value found on the Resistances and Weaknesses table in Building Creatures (page 123), such as 5 Shields for a 2nd-level scene starship or 18 Shields for a 15th-level scene starship.

Starship Actions: This lists the actions the crew of a starship (likely the PCs plus any NPCs aboard) can perform as part of the encounter. Actions are usually a 2-action activity so that a PC can perform only one of these actions during their turn. If there's an expectation of combat, such as fighting another ship, the starship should have at least one weapon the PCs can fire. Other actions might include special ship actions or actions related to the scene, like scanning or using a magical *aeon stone* console.

Designing Player Starships

Player starships must be built to provide the necessary tools to overcome the scene.

Necessary Tools: Make sure the starship can satisfy the victory conditions for the scene. If there's a need for Computers checks to obtain successes to end the encounter, there should be at least one role and associated action that enable the PCs to obtain those successes. To give the PCs more of an edge, you might decide to grant a starship bonus to Computers, which can assist the PCs and compensate for groups that might not have full mastery of one or more necessary skills.

Survivability: A player starship should generally skew to higher Hit Points if its AC is low and slightly lower Hit Points if the AC is higher. You'll want to compare these values to the damage output of the threats in your scene as detailed later in this chapter. A starship should be able to survive for multiple rounds in an encounter, unless the encounter is intended to be short or the PCs critically fail several key checks.

Action Variety: Create starship actions that use different skills and can be spread among different roles. Letting a pilot role focus on checks that involve Piloting is obvious, but you might

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combine that with an Escape the Area action that allows the science officer to perform the same action but using Computers instead. This lets multiple PCs contribute to the encounter.

Try to make sure that most actions, with the general exception of ranged gunner attacks, have multiple skills that a crew member can employ. Include some basic skills like Crafting and Athletics for some engineering tasks while also keeping Perception in mind as something most classes have training in. More esoteric skills, like Lore skills and skills related to magical traditions (Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion), should generally tie to a magic officer role or bespoke actions like scanning related cosmic events.

THREATS

The next element of a cinematic starship scene is the inclusion of one or more threats that contend with the PCs as they perform their actions. The values for many of a threat's entries, including AC, Hit Points, Initiative, Saving Throws, Shields, and Skills, should correspond to the numbers presented in Building Creatures (page 116), with the threat's numbers matching the scene's level.

Threat Name: A name and general description of the threat the PCs face.

Initiative: The statistic and appropriate modifier the threat uses to determine its initiative.

Skills: A list of skills relevant to the threat in an encounter. This should be filled in only if the threat has some means of using the skill or the skill is relevant to an ability the PCs might possess in the encounter.

AC: The Armor Class of the threat, if any. Some threats might be intangible (such as a computer virus affecting the PCs' starship during the scene) or too large in scope to attack (like an asteroid field) and won't require an AC entry.

Saving Throws: The relevant saving throws of the threat. In most cases, this indicates a Fortitude and Reflex save, but sometimes (such as with a living creature) a Will save might be necessary.

Hit Points & Shields: The Hit Points and Shields of the threat when relevant. Generally, a threat should have no higher than moderate Hit Points and only have Shields equal to the minimum resistance of the scene's level, if shields are appropriate on the threat.

Threat Routine: Like a complex hazard, each threat has a routine it performs on its turn in the initiative order. This routine lists the specific actions the threat takes during its initiative as well as relevant rules.

Designing Threats

Threats should all be designed and balanced together. The most basic threat is an enemy starship, and a one-on-one combat with a PC starship should be roughly comparable, with the multiple actions of the PCs' starship giving them an edge in the encounter. Designing multiple threats in a scene means you'll want to balance the encounter around exactly how each threat contributes.

Complications: Some threats should exist to complicate the PCs' actions. In a scene where the PCs act to obtain Victory Points, then consider having a complication that exists to stymie their efforts by imposing a skill penalty unless a crew member acts to negate the complicating hazard. In combats, this complication might be a nebula that scatters targeting and imposes a flat check on attacks akin to concealment, unless a crew member acts to overcome the effect. This works best with environmental effects and provides a good way for less direct roles, like magic and science officers, to interact with the encounter.

Indiscriminate Threats: One way to add an additional threat without breaking the overall balance of the encounter is to include a threat that targets everyone in the encounter indiscriminately. An example might be a magical effect that blasts the area with energy and blinds sensors (possibly requiring a crew action to counter) or an environmental effect that damages every side in a conflict. Having a hazard-like threat within the encounter that deals damage with a basic saving throw and affects the PCs and other present threats generally balances a combat-focused encounter but could have more ramifications in a timed event, as extra damage means the PCs can't remain operational for as long.

Multiple Starship Threats: Battling against a squadron of enemy fighters is an iconic scene, but if you include multiple enemy starship threats, the PCs can quickly find themselves overwhelmed. Instead, you might consider looking at the appropriate Hit Points and damage of one threat, then dividing it into groups. An appropriate 4th-level threat in a cinematic starship scene could have a moderate Hit Points of 60 (as per the Hit Points table in Building Creatures on page 123), which you could break down into groups of 15, giving you a total of four fighters. The damage of a moderate 4th-level threat is 2d6+5 damage per round, so you might consider having each fighter deal 1d6+3 damage with their attacks, meaning if each enemy fighter hits the PCs, they take more damage than moderate; however, the PCs compensate by being able to remove smaller threats at a faster rate.

COMPONENTS OF CINEMATIC STARSHIP SCENES

The following are a series of example components that you can use to construct cinematic starship scenes.

EXAMPLE VICTORY CONDITIONS

These examples are some different approaches to victory conditions you can add to an encounter. The difficulty of the victory conditions often determines the difficulty (and length) of the scene. You might have more than one set of victory conditions for a specific scene, depending on the overall complexity.

Defeat a Threat: Overcome a specific threat in the scene by reducing its Hit Points to 0 or otherwise overcoming or removing it from the encounter.

Victory Points: Use the Victory Point subsystem (page 206) to create a system of gradual successes or metrics for the PCs to achieve in an encounter.

Survival: A simple condition that requires the PCs' starship to survive for a set number of rounds or until a specific condition in the encounter is met.

EXAMPLE STARSHIPS

You can create a variety of different starships for the PCs to pilot during their encounter. The following are examples of common starship hull types you can base a scene around. You can also use these general starship types as inspiration for threats.

Fighter: Typically, this example is the smallest starship available and can seat one or two creatures of up to Large size.

Shuttle: A smaller starship that can contain up to six or eight creatures. Shuttles travel between different locations and rarely have amenities to be comfortable for extended missions.

Explorer: A vessel used by adventurers and mercenaries across the galaxy to explore. It can operate with up to 12 crew for prolonged periods of time.

Transport: A larger vessel used primarily to move crew and cargo from one area to another. It has some amenities but isn't intended for long-term missions.

Cruiser: A starship intended for war. Cruisers act as the faster vanguards of most fleets, alongside slightly smaller destroyers. A handful of corporations and mercenary companies have vessels of this size, while many militaries operate these vessels.

Battleship: Enormous vessels that act as the mainstay of most militaries. Some factions might possess only one of these behemoths. They primarily fill the role of projecting power in a region of space, and many act as carriers that can unload swarms of smaller vessels.

EXAMPLE ROLES & ACTIONS

Most starships have a common array of roles, though depending on the scene, you might create new or niche roles that are appropriate to the narrative. The following are examples of common starship roles the PCs can occupy.

Captain: A leader in a tense situation. The captain's role is to provide instruction and guidance to their crew while also reciting some inspiring speeches or demoralizing quips to enemy starship crews.

Engineer: A technical expert who focuses on keeping the starship running. They divert power to specific starship systems and can complete battlefield repairs.

Gunner: Gunners fire starship weapons. Whether it's unleashing a swarm of missiles or letting loose with a crackling blast of magitech electricity, gunners operate the myriad weapon systems of a starship and target threats in most starship scenes.

Magic Officer: Some starships possess esoteric systems powered by one or more of the magical traditions. Operating a magical scrying sensor or taking part in a ritual within the bowels of the vessel to increase combat capabilities are just some of the many actions this special crew role might take.

Pilot: Pilots move the ship and dictate its course. Most of the time, this movement will be achieved through a Piloting check, which might be attempted to navigate a hazard or to perform a specific maneuver in tense scenes. In longer starship scenes, a pilot might Plot a Course to navigate to a region to trigger an additional phase of a scene.

Science Officer: Employing high-tech sensors or personal knowledge, the science officer manages the tasks of scanning interstellar objects and operating certain technical aspects of the ship. They might use Computers as part of these actions or a specific Lore skill to Recall Knowledge to assist in an encounter.

Niche Roles: A catch-all for different roles onboard a starship that might not be common in most scenes but could be important to a specific scene. You might have a cook role representing the actions of a favored NPC onboard the ship who provides a small bonus or a corporate representative who can use their negotiating skills to assist in an encounter.

EXAMPLE THREATS

Threats obstruct the PCs from achieving their victory conditions in a cinematic starship scene. There are many different approaches you can take to adding threats, whether it be direct opposition or less overt complications. The following are types of threats you can include with some specific examples.

Enemy Starship: The most common threat in a cinematic starship scene is another starship. There could be one or more starships that oppose the PCs through combat or compete for similar victory conditions in an encounter. **Examples:** a Corpse Fleet raider, a hot-shot racer, a rival corporation science vessel, a Swarm battleship.

Environmental Effect: Though space is vast and mostly empty, there are many natural effects that can complicate a cinematic starship scene and provide the PCs with challenges to navigate around or overcome. **Examples:** asteroid fields, Drift storms, planetary atmosphere, solar flares.

Magical Effect: In a science-fantasy setting, there's always something magical around the next turn. Strange effects related to the different traditions of magic can have an overt impact on starship scenes or even act as time pressure, or have a more mental effect. **Examples:** a magically animated landscape that reaches up through the atmosphere to strike a starship, a mental compulsion on another threat in the scene, another plane of reality transposed into the scene.

Megafauna: Though similar in almost every respect to enemy starships, some foes are simply so large they can be treated as starships. **Examples:** dragons, omas, swarms of alien fauna.

REWARDS & CONSEQUENCES

Depending on the circumstances of a cinematic starship scene, there should always be some type of reward the PCs can earn. They might acquire salvage from defeated threats or obtain vital intelligence on their missions. In scenes where success is measured using Victory Points, the number of points the PCs collect might affect the rewards they receive, adding a bit of "risk versus reward" in encounters where the PCs could easily escape after hitting the necessary threshold but could remain longer to get more successes. This works especially well in scenes like intelligence gathering or asteroid mining, where the PCs might feel the need to push themselves to leave with more. Additional objectives also provide a means for PCs to earn additional rewards through their actions.

Failure in a starship scene should rarely end with the party dying. A PC starship brought to 0 Hit Points becomes disabled, meaning it can be boarded or left adrift for the PCs to enact emergency repairs on. Some encounters, such as a sun about

to go nova, might necessitate PC death, but you should always ensure that the PCs have ample time to escape. Instead of death, consider consequences such as the losing of vital intelligence, entering the next encounter at a disadvantage, or facing enemy forces that have had more time to prepare.

STARSHIP SCENE EXAMPLES

ASTEROID AMBUSH — SCENE 2

STARSHIP SCENE

The PCs are on an Ulrikka Clanholdings rock hopper starship scanning a light asteroid field for precious resources when a stealthy Corpse Fleet raider attacks!

Victory Conditions The PCs defeat the Corpse Fleet raider by reducing its Hit Points to 0, or they escape the asteroid field by earning 5 or more Escape Points during the encounter.

Starship Description The RC-HPR is known as a rock hopper and is a stock-standard dwarven mining vessel armed with self-defense systems.

Available Roles engineer, 2 gunners, 2 pilots, science officer

Starship Bonuses Computers +1

AC 15; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +6

Shields 5 (regains 5 per round); **HP** 35

Ranged ❖❖ (gunner, martial weapon) mining laser (deadly d8), **Damage** 1d8+4 fire

Avoid Asteroids ❖❖ (pilot or science officer) Attempt a DC 15 Computers or Piloting check to avoid asteroids. On a success, the starship is unaffected by the light asteroid field's next routine. On a critical failure, the starship takes damage as though affected by the light asteroid field's routine.

Patch Job ❖❖ (engineer) Attempt a DC 16 Crafting check or a DC 18 Athletics check to try to patch some damage the starship has taken.

Critical Success The starship regains 2d8 Hit Points and loses any persistent damage conditions.

Success The starship regains 2d8 Hit Points.

Tactical Withdrawal ❖❖ (pilot) Attempt a DC 16 Piloting check or a DC 20 Perception check to maneuver out of the asteroid field.

Critical Success Gain 2 Escape Points.

Success Gain 1 Escape Point.

Critical Failure Lose 1 Escape Point.

Threat: Corpse Fleet Raider A Pale Butcher Scout vessel that acts as the vanguard of wider Corpse Fleet operations. It's intent on remaining undetected in the asteroid field and destroying the PCs to prevent them from leaking its presence.

Initiative Piloting +9

Skills Piloting +9

AC 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +10

Shields 5 (regains 2 per round); **HP** 25

Threat Routine (2 actions) The Corpse Fleet raider uses 1 action to outmaneuver the PC, attempting a Piloting check against the Reflex DC of the PCs' starship (typically DC 16). On a success, the raider outmaneuvers its foes, giving the PCs' starship the off-guard condition until the end of the round. Then, the Corpse Fleet raider uses 1 action to make a light plasma cannon Strike against the PCs' starship.

Ranged ❖ light plasma cannon +9, **Damage** 1d10+4 fire plus 2 persistent electricity against off-guard targets

Threat: Light Asteroid Field A collection of floating planetoid debris fills the space of this scene. Left unattended, the asteroid field can damage both ships in the encounter.

Initiative Stealth +5

Threat Routine (1 action) The asteroid field batters all starships. Both ships take 2d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 15 basic Reflex save). If one of the PCs has successfully Avoided Asteroids (see above), the PCs' starship is unharmed by this routine.

Ending the Encounter The encounter ends if the PCs' starship is destroyed, or the PCs achieve one or more of the victory conditions.

SCANNING A DYING SUN — SCENE 7

STARSHIP SCENE

The PCs fly an explorer-class starship to monitor the final moments of a star before it collapses and unleashes an immense supernova. A swarm of fire elementals complicates matters.

Victory Conditions The PCs obtain 6 or more Scan Points and then escape the encounter.

Starship Description The Idaran Peregrinasi-style starship is a well-regarded exploratory vessel constructed by kasathas of the *Idari*. It's outfitted for deep space exploration.

Available Roles captain, 2 gunners, pilot, 2 science officers

Starship Bonuses Computers +2, Piloting +1

AC 25; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +18

Shields 10 (regains 5 per round); **HP** 90

Ranged ❖❖ (gunner, martial weapon) torpedo launcher, **Damage** 2d10+8 piercing plus 1d8 persistent electricity

Ranged ❖❖ (gunner, simple weapon) flak cannon, **Damage** 2d6+6 slashing

Deft Maneuvers ❖❖ (pilot) Attempt a DC 25 Piloting check to maneuver in a way that prioritizes one or more of the threats in the immediate area. On a success, choose one of the following: gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saves to avoid the collapsing star's routine, gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the next attack against your starship, or gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the next ranged Strike a gunner attempts. On a critical success, select up to two of these benefits.

Inspire Crew ❖❖ (captain) Attempt a DC 28 Diplomacy or Intimidation check to inspire the crew of your starship to push themselves.

Critical Success As success, but choose two allies.

Success Choose one ally to gain a +2 status bonus to their next check attempted as part of the scene.

Critical Failure The next crew member to attempt a check as part of the scene takes a -1 status penalty to their check.

Scan Star ❖❖ (science officer) Attempt a DC 27 Computers check to scan the degrading star and further collect data.

Critical Success Gain 2 Scan Points.

Success Gain 1 Scan Point.

Critical Failure Lose 1 Scan Point.

Tactical Withdrawal ❖❖❖ (captain or pilot) Activate the Drift engine to escape the system prior to destruction. This

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action causes the vessel to leave the system immediately, though the recharge time on the Drift Engine means the vessel can't return prior to the star's total collapse.

Threat: Collapsing Star The blue star of the system is undergoing cataclysmic stellar degradation, and it unleashes blasts of stellar energy before imploding and destroying the entire system.

Initiative Stealth +11

Threat Routine (1 action) The blue star blasts the area with a combination of ejected plasma and radiation. The PCs' starship takes 2d10+10 fire damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save). Roll a DC 10 flat check; on a success, the star gains 1 Nova Point (2 Nova Points on a critical success). Once the star obtains 8 or more Nova Points, it instead uses Stellar Implosion at the start of the following round.

Stellar Implosion ◆ The star begins its immediate collapse. The PCs can immediately detect the danger and have until the end of the round to escape into the Drift; otherwise, their ship is destroyed along with the rest of the star system.

Threat: Elemental Host A group of fire elementals converge near the dying sun, supping on the sun's last bits of energy. The swarm is incredibly territorial, moving to attack the PCs' starship and harass them as they move within range to complete their scans.

Initiative Piloting +15

Skills Piloting +15

AC 22; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +15

HP 90; **Immunities** fire

Elemental Interference The elemental swarm begins the encounter by gorging on the dying sun. While gorging, the swarm's presence imposes a –4 circumstance penalty to all checks to Scan Star. If the swarm is attacked by a starship ranged Strike, then it ceases its gorging and attacks until the PCs retreat.

Threat Routine (2 actions) Once attacked, the swarm uses 1 action to attack the PCs with a swarm flyby Strike. If the attack hits, the elemental swarm spends 1 action having some of its component members burn into the PCs' hull, dealing an additional 2d12+10 fire damage (DC 24 basic Fortitude). If the swarm's initial Strike misses, it instead makes a second Strike.

Ranged ◆ swarm flyby +15, **Damage** 2d8+8 fire

Ending the Encounter The encounter ends when the PCs escape the star system using Tactical Withdrawal or are destroyed by the collapsing star or elemental host.

SONGBIRD SORTIE SCENE 12

STARSHIP SCENE

The PCs perform a dramatic air show flying over Songbird Station as backup performers for a famous musical act when a Swarm fleet emerges from the Drift and attacks the concert!

Victory Conditions The PCs obtain 6 or more Drama Points, then shoot down the Swarm components to rescue the crowd!

Starship Description The Norikama prototypes chosen for the concert were designed for speed and agility. A matching pair are available, with comfortably nestled dual seats allowing room for a pilot and gunner to fly in tandem. They can be custom painted and personalized with insignia to spec.

Available Roles 2 gunners, 2 pilots

Starship Bonuses Performance +1, Piloting +2

AC 30; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +25

Shields 10 (regains 5 per round); **HP** 165

Ranged ◆◆ (gunner, martial weapon) plasma cannon, **Damage** 3d10+5 fire plus 1d6 persistent electricity

Ranged ◆◆ (gunner, simple weapon) missile pod, **Damage** 3d10+8 fire

Evacuate the Dance Floor ◆◆ (any) Attempt a DC 31 Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance check to order the crowd to flee.

Critical Success The crowd evacuates. Ignore the penalty from Panic at the Concert! The Swarm invaders spend their first three rounds failing to find victims, until the PCs intervene.

Success The crowd mostly evacuates. Reduce the penalty from Panic at the Concert! to –1. The Swarm invaders spend their first round chasing but unable to catch any members of the crowd.

Critical Failure The crowd thinks the threats are part of the show until its too late. The penalty incurred from Panic at the Concert! increases to –3.

Show Off ◆◆ (pilot) Attempt a DC 30 Piloting check to perform a daring or exciting maneuver to impress the crowd.

Critical Success Gain 2 Drama Points.

Success Gain 1 Drama Point.

Critical Failure Lose 1 Drama Point.

Trick Shot ◆◆ (gunner) Attempt a DC 30 Computers or Performance check to add a dramatic flourish to your shot.

Critical Success Gain 2 Drama Points.

Success Gain 1 Drama Point.

Critical Failure Lose 1 Drama Point.

Threat: Swarm Invaders Swarm components viciously attack after suddenly phasing in from the Drift without warning.

Initiative Stealth +22

Skills Piloting +20

AC 30; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +15

HP 90; **Resistances** acid 15

Panic at the Concert! The crowd panics and begins fleeing. Any stray shot could injure someone or start a fire that blocks their evacuation route! The tense, chaotic environment imposes a –2 circumstance penalty to all Strikes until the crowd is evacuated. This penalty does not apply to Trick Shot.

Threat Routine (3 actions) The Swarm invaders use an action to attack a PC starship with a biocannon. Then the Swarm invaders use their remaining actions and all actions in subsequent rounds to chase the crowd and Ingest a different member of the crowd until the PCs intervene; they then focus their attacks on the PCs.

Ranged ◆ biocannon +24, **Damage** 3d10+10 fire

Ingest ◆◆ A Swarm component viciously attacks with jaw and claws. If the target is a PC starship, this deals 5d8 acid and slashing damage (basic DC 28 Fortitude save). If the target is a member of the crowd, they are eaten and die.

Ending the Encounter The encounter ends when the PCs earn 6 Drama Points and defeat the Swarm, or when their starships are destroyed by the Swarm.



VEHICLES

Whether examining the heights of an ancient alien megalith in an enercopter or weaving through the traffic of a neon-lit city on an enercycle, vehicles come in every shape and size to help fulfill a myriad of roles for both player characters and their foes!

Vehicles play many roles in a game. They're the primary modes of transportation in most settlements, but when your urban cruiser is attacked, it becomes part of an encounter.

The majority of the rules in this section are for using vehicles in encounters, but vehicles are also useful during exploration and downtime. A starship doesn't follow the same rules as other vehicles (see page 226 for more information).

VEHICLE BASICS

Vehicles are objects. They have object immunities (*Player Core* 236), and they can't act. In addition to the statistics most objects have, vehicles have several additional statistics and abilities. Vehicles have a size like any object, but their spaces are more specifically defined. All vehicles come with a console that controls features like air conditioning and music and that syncs to a comm unit. Vehicles also have specialized movement rules.

SIZE, SPACE, AND CAPACITY

Vehicles have size traits, but they don't occupy the same spaces that most creatures use. Instead, each vehicle has specific dimensions provided in its stat block. The sizes given are for Medium humanoid creatures, and creatures with different shapes and sizes might need vehicles that are differently sized. Buying vehicles for Tiny, Small, or Large creatures rarely impacts the consumer price of the vehicle.

Most vehicles are Large or larger, and many are made for the purpose of carrying cargo. Unless stated otherwise, the amount of cargo a vehicle can carry depends on its size, terrain, and propulsion. Most land transportation can haul around 500 Bulk of goods, while pulled vehicles can typically hold 100 Bulk per Large creature pulling. Water vehicles, such as a ship, have limits that are more based on volume than weight; a ship can hold upward of 1,500 Bulk. Flying vehicles can typically hold only 1/10 the Bulk of a water vehicle and still remain airborne. The GM might rule that unique or unusual vehicles can hold different amounts of Bulk.

MOVEMENT AND HEADING

A vehicle's movement type is determined by the vehicle itself,

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while its movement each round is based on the pilot's actions. Vehicles trigger reactions when they move, just like a creature does, as do the actions of the pilot and any passengers.

Creatures can rotate and turn freely, so when you play a creature, you usually don't need to keep track of which way it's facing. However, vehicles can't turn on a dime, so when controlling a vehicle, you need to keep track of which direction it's facing. This is called the vehicle's heading.

When a vehicle moves, it must move in the direction of its heading—it can't move backward or sideways, though it can turn gradually as it moves forward. Most vehicles can turn up to 90 degrees for every vehicle length they move forward. For example, a 10-foot-long enercycle could turn left in only 10 feet. A 100-foot-long cargo ship, however, would need 100 feet to make the same turn; so if the cargo ship has a 30-foot Speed, turning typically requires several actions' worth of movement.

Some rules specify that a vehicle must move in a straight line. This line is measured from the center of the vehicle's front edge, and it can skew up to 45 degrees from the vehicle's current heading.

When using a vehicle in exploration mode, the vehicle's Speed determines its travel speed just like a creature (for more information, see the Travel Speed table on page 430 of *Player Core*), multiplied by 10 if the vehicle is motorized or magical. No Drive actions or Piloting checks are necessary to pilot a vehicle at these speeds.

PROPULSION

Vehicles typically travel over land, on water, or through the air, and their Speeds indicate their terrain and movement types. But vehicles also have a form of propulsion—the way in which their movement is powered—and this propulsion often has additional considerations.

There are five main types of propulsion: magical, motorized, pulled, rowed, and wind. A vehicle can have more than one means of propulsion, though it usually uses only one type of propulsion at a time. The vehicle's means of propulsion informs the skills a pilot can use for piloting checks, and some means of propulsion have additional rules.

Magical

Magically propelled vehicles are powered by spells, magic items, or an entirely magical engine. A magical propulsion system can be targeted with counteracting effects like *dispel magic*, using half the vehicle's level rounded up for its counteract rank and a standard DC for the vehicle's level for the counteract check. A creature can use Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion (depending on the type of magic), or Piloting for a magical vehicle's piloting checks.

Motorized

Motorized vehicles are the most common but are vulnerable to effects that target tech items and can gain the glitching condition. Modern motorized vehicles don't require an expendable resource to operate, although particularly archaic models might run on batteries, petrol, or other chemicals, draining a charge of petrol per hour. Motorized vehicles are piloted using the Piloting skill.

Pulled

These vehicles are wheeled conveyances pulled by one or more creatures. The Speed of the vehicle can never exceed that of the slowest creature pulling the vehicle. The creatures pulling the vehicle don't act on their own; they instead act as part of the vehicle's actions, and their movement as part of those actions triggers reactions just as it does for the vehicle itself and its pilot.

When a pulled vehicle takes collision damage, so do the creatures pulling that vehicle (though they can typically attempt the basic Reflex saving throw to mitigate that damage). The death of one or more pulling creatures might damage or slow the vehicle, and it might cause the pilot to lose control.

For a vehicle pulled by an animal or similarly unintelligent creature, a pilot can use Nature for piloting checks; for sapient pulling creatures, the pilot can instead use Diplomacy or Intimidation for piloting checks. Piloting can usually be substituted for these skills.

Rowed

These vehicles are propelled by the power of creatures rowing the vehicle from within. The creatures rowing the vehicle act only as part of the vehicle's actions, and their movement as part of those actions triggers reactions just as it does for the vehicle itself and its pilot (though rowers often have some degree of cover).

When a rowed vehicle takes collision damage, so do the creatures rowing that vehicle (though they can typically attempt the basic Reflex saving throw to mitigate that damage). The death of one or more creatures might cause the vehicle to go out of control or slow the vehicle but usually doesn't damage the vehicle.

A pilot on a vehicle rowed by other people can use Diplomacy or Intimidation for piloting checks.

Wind

Wind-propelled vehicles require some form of air movement to power them, and adverse wind conditions can cause them to stall or even go out of control. Pilots of wind-powered vehicles can use Nature or Piloting for piloting checks.

PILOTING A VEHICLE

In encounter mode, a vehicle moves on its pilot's turn, and the pilot must use their actions to control it. A vehicle can take part in only 1 move action each round, even if multiple creatures Take Control as pilots on the same round.

VEHICLE MOMENTUM

A vehicle in motion builds up momentum that keeps it in motion. Each round, if the vehicle has moved in the previous round, the pilot must either use another move action or Stop the vehicle. If the pilot does neither of these things on their turn (even if the pilot Delays), the vehicle continues to move and becomes uncontrolled, as described in Uncontrolled Vehicles on page 237.



Enercopter

PILOTING CHECKS

Many actions related to vehicles call for the pilot to attempt a piloting check. The skills a pilot can use for a piloting check are listed in the vehicle's stat block, but most vehicles use Piloting along with others determined by their propulsion. The creature piloting a vehicle when an encounter begins can usually roll an appropriate piloting skill for that vehicle for initiative.

The GM sets the DC of the piloting check using a standard DC for the vehicle's level, with adjustments based on the circumstances. Generally speaking, an action that would move a vehicle through difficult terrain increases the DC to a hard DC for its level, and moving through greater difficult terrain increases the DC to incredibly hard. Other factors, such as turbulent winds for a wind-powered vehicle, monsters threatening the creatures in a motorized vehicle, or rough seas for a water-based vehicle, could all increase the DC of a vehicle's piloting checks.

PILOTING ACTIONS

Characters use the actions listed below to move and interact with vehicles. The reckless trait is described below.

BOARD ◆

MOVE

Requirements You're adjacent to a point of entry on the vehicle you're attempting to board.

You board a vehicle through an open top, a door, a portal, or a hatch; if you're already on board, you can instead use this action to disembark into an empty space adjacent to the vehicle's point of entry. Using this action while the vehicle is in motion is challenging, requiring a successful Acrobatics or Athletics check with a DC equal to the vehicle's AC.

DRIVE (VARIES)

MOVE

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle.

You pilot your vehicle to move. Decide how many actions you intend to spend before you begin Driving. The effects depend on the number of actions you spend. You can't Drive through spaces occupied by creatures, even if they're allies.

◆ Attempt a piloting check. On a success, the vehicle moves up to its Speed and can turn normally. On a failure, the vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line. On a critical failure, the vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line and becomes uncontrolled.

◆◆ (reckless) The vehicle moves up to twice its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading.

◆◆◆ (reckless) You take a –5 penalty on your piloting check to maintain control of the vehicle. The vehicle moves up to three times its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading.

RUN OVER ◆◆◆

MOVE RECKLESS

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle.

You try to run over creatures with your vehicle, possibly also ramming one larger creature or object. If you maintain control of your vehicle, the vehicle moves up to twice its Speed in a straight line at the vehicle's current heading. You attempt to run over any creatures in your path two sizes smaller than the vehicle or smaller, and you can attempt to ram one target creature or object in your path one size smaller than the vehicle or larger.

Each creature in your path, including a rammed target, takes the vehicle's collision damage (basic Reflex save at vehicle's collision DC). If the rammed target is a vehicle, its pilot can attempt a piloting check in place of this Reflex save, with the same results. If the target of your ram takes damage, you and your vehicle each take collision damage (no save) and your movement ends.

STOP ◆

MANIPULATE

Requirements You are piloting a vehicle in motion.

You bring the vehicle to a stop.

TAKE CONTROL ◆

MANIPULATE

Requirements You are aboard the vehicle and adjacent to its controls.

You grab the wheel or some other mechanism in order to control the vehicle. Attempt a piloting check; on a success, you become the vehicle's pilot, or regain control of the vehicle if it was uncontrolled. Some vehicles have complicated controls that cause this action to become a multi-action activity.

RECKLESS PILOTING

Actions that have the reckless trait push the pilot and the vehicle beyond the normal parameters for safe operation, and the pilot risks losing control of the vehicle. When performing a reckless action, the pilot must first attempt an appropriate piloting check to keep control of the vehicle, with the following effects. Resolve this piloting check before resolving the action itself.

Success The action occurs as described.

Failure The vehicle moves its Speed in a straight line along its most recent heading, drifting up to 45 degrees at the GM's discretion, and becomes uncontrolled.

UNCONTROLLED VEHICLES

Some situations can cause a pilot to lose control of their vehicle. Most commonly, this is due to a failed piloting check for a reckless action, but it can also occur if a round passes without a pilot using a move action to control the vehicle or Stopping the vehicle. A vehicle can also become uncontrolled if the pilot becomes unable to act during a move action to control the vehicle. For example, if a vehicle's movement triggers a Reactive Strike that knocks the pilot unconscious or paralyzes them, the vehicle becomes uncontrolled.

An uncontrolled vehicle continues to move each round at its most recent pilot's initiative position. The distance it moves each round is 10 feet less than on the previous round, always in a straight line at its current heading until it crashes or it comes to a stop. At your discretion, it could slow down more if it's on uneven terrain, difficult terrain, on an upward slope, or facing adverse wind conditions; by the same token, it could stay at the same speed or even accelerate if it's on a downward slope or being pushed by strong winds.

An uncontrolled vehicle in motion interacts with obstacles, other vehicles, and creatures using the effects of the Run Over action, except that the distance it moves is dictated by the factors above instead of the Speed specified in that action.

VEHICLES IN COMBAT

Whether engaging in a turf war from atop a hoverboard or chasing criminals in a patrol dirigible, characters sometimes attack from a vehicle or target other creatures aboard a vehicle. Attacks made while on a vehicle that has moved within the last round take a –2 penalty, or a –4 penalty if the vehicle is uncontrolled or any action in the last round had the reckless trait.

While on a vehicle, a character might have cover from certain angles of attack. A vehicle with sides but no top, such as a convertible, usually provides lesser cover, or standard cover from an attacker on the ground. An enclosed vehicle, such as a car, provides greater cover or might prevent attacks entirely. Breaking the vehicle can reduce the cover it provides.

Some vehicles have special mounted weapons that can be used by the pilot or passengers. These are typically ranged weapons, such as a plasma cannon, and use the same rules as any other weapon, save that they might be able to target only creatures in a certain range or direction.

BROKEN VEHICLES

When a vehicle is broken, it becomes harder to use. It takes a –2 penalty to its AC, saves, and collision DC, and the DC of all piloting checks related to the vehicle increase by 5. The broken vehicle's Speeds are halved.

A vehicle reduced to 0 HP is destroyed, like any other item. If the vehicle is in water when it's destroyed, it sinks; if it's flying, it falls and everyone aboard takes falling damage.

VEHICLE STATISTICS

Vehicles can be as simple as a trolley or as large and complex as an airplane. Whatever the size or complexity of a vehicle, it uses the following stat block format.

VEHICLE NAME **VEHICLE [LEVEL]**

SIZE | OTHER TRAITS

Price This entry lists the vehicle's Price. This doesn't include creatures for pulling a vehicle, materials needed to power the vehicle, or the cost of rowers.

Space This entry gives the vehicle's dimensions, not including any creatures pulling the vehicle.

Crew The crew members required to operate the vehicle; **Passengers** The number of passengers the vehicle is typically configured to carry, if any, when the vehicle isn't carrying cargo. The number might be reduced if the vehicle is carrying cargo, at the GM's discretion.

Piloting Check This entry lists the skills that can be used for piloting checks while operating the vehicle. Some skills might increase the DC; these list the DC adjustment in parentheses following the skill name.

AC The vehicle's AC; **Saving Throws** The vehicle's saves (typically only Fortitude). If a vehicle needs to attempt a saving throw that isn't listed, the pilot attempts a piloting check at the same DC instead.

Hardness The vehicle's hardness, **HP** The vehicle's Hit Points, with its Broken Threshold in parentheses; **Immunities** The vehicle's immunities; **Weaknesses** The vehicle's weaknesses, if any; **Resistances** The vehicle's resistances, if any.

Speed The vehicle's Speeds, each followed by the propulsion type for that Speed in parentheses. A pulled vehicle indicates the number and size of the pulling creatures.

Collision The vehicle's collision damage and the DC for saving throws to mitigate that damage. Unless otherwise stated, collisions deal bludgeoning damage. If the vehicle has any other form of attack, like mounted weaponry, they appear in their own entries below this one.

Special Abilities Any abilities unique to the vehicle are listed at the end of the stat block.



Enercycle

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AIR VEHICLES

TURBOGLIDER — VEHICLE 1

LARGE TECH

Price 100 credits

Space 4 feet long, 10 feet wide, 1 foot high

Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 1 (motorized only)

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 14) or Nature (DC 16)

AC 12; **Fort** +6

Hardness 5, **HP** 15 (BT 7); **Immunities** object immunities; **Weaknesses** fire 5

Speed fly 60 feet (motorized) or fly 40 feet (wind)

Collision 1d8 (DC 15)

Cruising Drop The only way to use the wind propulsion of a turboglider is to jump off a steep incline or if you're already in the air. An uncontrolled turboglider using wind propulsion falls 60 feet each round until the pilot successfully Takes Control. A turboglider must be controlled to switch propulsion. If the glider hits the ground before the pilot successfully Takes Control, the pilot and the glider each take falling damage.

SKYBOAT — VEHICLE 3

HUGE MAGICAL TECH

Price 1,500 credits

Space 15 feet long, 10 feet wide, 3 feet high

Crew 1 pilot, 1 crew; **Passengers** 4

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 17) or Nature (DC 19)

AC 16; **Fort** +10

Hardness 10, **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** electricity, object immunities

Speed fly 40 feet (magical) or fly 60 feet (wind)

Collision 2d10 (DC 20)

Harness the Storm ◆◆◆ (electricity) **Requirements** The skyboat is in a rainstorm; **Effect** The skyboat harnesses the storm's electrical energy through its magical sails, then expels this energy as a bolt of lightning that erupts from the front of the skyboat. The lightning deals 2d8 electricity damage to each creature in a 60-foot line (DC 18 basic Reflex save). Harness the Storm stops working if the skyboat is broken.

ENERCOPTER — VEHICLE 5

HUGE TECH

Price 4,500 credits

Space 20 feet long, 10 feet wide, 12 feet high

Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 7

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 20)

AC 18; **Fort** +12

Hardness 10, **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** object immunities

Speed fly 50 feet (motorized)

Collision 3d10 (DC 20)

PATROL DIRIGIBLE — VEHICLE 8

GARGANTUAN TECH

Price 16,000 credits

Space 80 feet long, 60 feet wide, 40 feet high

Crew 1 pilot, 1 crew; **Passengers** 12

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 23) or Nature (DC 25; wind only)

AC 20; **Fort** +14

Hardness 10, **HP** 100 (BT 50); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weakness** fire 15

Speed fly 30 feet (motorized) or fly 10 feet (wind)

Collision 6d10 (DC 24)

Drifter The patrol dirigible can only be steered using its motorized propulsion, otherwise relying on favorable wind currents to carry it in the right direction. If the pilot fails to maintain control of the dirigible using its wind propulsion, the dirigible drifts whichever way the wind carries it, moving up to four times its Speed each round as determined by the GM.

Hangar Bay The patrol dirigible provides a place for up to two Huge or smaller vehicles to be docked.

LAND VEHICLES

HOVERBOARD — VEHICLE 0

MEDIUM TECH

Price 90 credits

Space 4 feet long, 1 foot wide, 6 inches high

Crew 1 pilot

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 14), Acrobatics (DC 15), or Athletics (DC 16)

AC 11; **Fort** +5

Hardness 3, **HP** 14 (BT 7); **Immunities** object immunities

Speed fly 40 feet (motorized)

Collision 1d8 (DC 14)

Hover A hoverboard maintains an altitude of 6 inches above other surfaces, such as the ground or water. If driven off a high surface, the hoverboard loses 20 feet of altitude per round, landing without harm to the hoverboard or its pilot.

Portable The hoverboard can be carried as an item with 1 Bulk.

FORKLIFT — VEHICLE 1

MEDIUM TECH

Price 100 credits

Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 7 feet high

Crew 1 pilot

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 15)

AC 11; **Fort** +7

Hardness 5, **HP** 18 (BT 9); **Immunities** object immunities

Speed 20 feet (motorized)

Collision 2d6 (DC 15)

Heavy Load A forklift carries its cargo on its front forks and can carry up to 1,000 Bulk.

Lift ◆ The pilot raises the forklift's forks up to 15 feet in the air, or lowers the forklift's forks down to the ground.

ENERCYCLE — VEHICLE 1

LARGE TECH

Price 700 credits

Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 3 feet high

Crew 1 pilot

Piloting Check Piloting (DC 15)

AC 11; **Fort** +6

Hardness 5, **HP** 14 (BT 7); **Immunities** object immunities

Speed 60 feet (motorized)
Collision 2d4 (DC 15)
Portable The enercycle can be pulled along the ground on its wheel by a Medium creature. The creature is encumbered.

URBAN CRUISER VEHICLE 4

LARGE TECH

Price 3,000 credits
Space 10 feet long, 10 feet wide, 4 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 3
Piloting Check Piloting (DC 19)
AC 16; **Fort** +11
Hardness 5, **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** object immunities
Speed 55 feet (motorized)
Collision 2d10 (DC 19)
Middle Seat A Small creature can fit in the backseat of an urban cruiser that already has 3 passengers.

SEA VEHICLES

MOTOR BOAT VEHICLE 1

UNCOMMON LARGE

Price 110 credits
Space 15 feet long, 5 feet wide, 4 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 5
Piloting Check Piloting (DC 15)
AC 11; **Fort** +7
Hardness 5, **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** object immunities
Speed swim 30 feet (motorized)
Collision 2d6 (DC 16)

TORPEDO MINISUB VEHICLE 3

LARGE TECH

Price 1,500 credits
Space 10 feet long, 5 feet wide, 3 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 1
Piloting Check Piloting (DC 17) or Nature (DC 19)
AC 14; **Fort** +8
Hardness 5, **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** object immunities
Speed swim 40 feet (motorized)
Collision 2d10 (DC 18)
Submersible The torpedo minisub can travel beneath the surface of the water, carrying an air reservoir suitable to sustain 2 Medium creatures for up to 24 hours. The torpedo minisub can safely reach depths of up to 1 mile. If broken, the torpedo minisub loses air from its reservoir, reducing the stored air by 10 minutes per round. A broken torpedo minisub has its maximum depth reduced by half (and rises to that depth when broken, if necessary).

SPACE VEHICLES

DROP POD VEHICLE 4

HUGE TECH

Price 2,500 credits
Space 12 feet long, 12 feet wide, 15 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 5
Piloting Check Piloting (DC 18), Computers (DC 20), or Survival (DC 20)
AC 16; **Fort** +11
Hardness 15, **HP** 70 (BT 35); **Immunities** object immunities; **Resistances** fire 10
Speed controlled plummet (motorized)
Collision 2d10 (DC 19)
Controlled Plummet This vehicle is programmed to deploy from another airborne vehicle or spaceship and fall toward the ground at a rate of 500 feet the first round and 1,500 feet each round thereafter, for a world with normal gravity. One round before impact, antigrav rotors, parachutes, and retrorockets slow the descent to 60 feet per round, allowing for a safe landing (even if uncontrolled).
Enclosed The pilot and passengers of a drop pod are completely enclosed and don't have line of sight or line of effect with any creatures or objects outside the vehicle.
Space Vehicle This vehicle protects its users from the dangers of space, including the benefits of basic environmental protection and a commercial filtered rebreather (*Player Core* 268).

WAKESKIMMER VEHICLE 10

LARGE TECH

Price 28,000 credits
Space 15 feet long, 6 feet wide, 6 feet high
Crew 1 pilot; **Passengers** 3
Piloting Check Piloting (DC 26), Computers (DC 28), or Survival (DC 28)
AC 25; **Fort** +19
Hardness 15, **HP** 160 (BT 80); **Immunities** object immunities; **Resistances** cold 15, fire 15
Speed fly 60 feet (motorized; space only) or swim 40 feet (motorized)
Collision 6d10 (DC 27)
Sea-to-Sky Transference ◆❯❯❯ The pilot engages transference mode, causing the wakeskimmer to launch itself from a body of water (or other fluid) up into orbit or to plummet from space into the sea, at a Speed of 1,500 feet per round.
Space Vehicle This vehicle protects its users from the dangers of space, including the benefits of basic environmental protection and a commercial filtered rebreather (*Player Core* 268).



Wakeskimmer

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CHAPTER 5: ANACHRONISTIC ADVENTURES

Starfinder is a science-fantasy setting, a galaxy full of magic and tech set in the far future. The Starfinder and Pathfinder games are fully compatible–the rules for one game work with the other. This chapter can help GMs choose which elements fit best in their games, how to adjust them if necessary, and how to incorporate two different timelines in the same adventure.



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This chapter explores how to incorporate elements from Pathfinder into a Starfinder campaign, or vice versa.

- **Timeshifted Adventures** (page 242) discusses how PCs can use Pathfinder rules elements in a Starfinder campaign.
- **Archaic Adventures** (page 246) gives advice for GMs and PCs who use Starfinder rules elements in a Pathfinder campaign.
- **Anachronistic Creatures** (page 250) explains the key differences between Pathfinder and Starfinder creatures, including guidelines for how you can use one monster in the other setting.
- **Anachronistic Gear** (page 252) provides guidelines on how to use Starfinder equipment in a Pathfinder game and vice versa.

FULLY COMPATIBLE

The rules for Starfinder and Pathfinder are fully compatible. Both include sci-fi and fantasy themes, and many thematic elements fit seamlessly within another. If your campaign tells a story of time travel, an alien ship loaded with futuristic tech crashing on a primeval world, or you simply want more options for your game, you might decide to allow PCs to choose options from both games.

Even though the rules are compatible, some options from Starfinder aren't a great fit for a Pathfinder game, and the reverse is true as well. For example, it's much easier to get darkvision and flight in Starfinder than in Pathfinder. If you find this interferes with your campaign, you could restrict access to any equipment, feats, or spells from Starfinder that grant darkvision, or limit ancestries and equipment that grant flight at 1st level.

RARITY

Even if you're running a Starfinder campaign with no Pathfinder elements, or vice versa, use the uncommon and rare traits to highlight that not every published rule element is appropriate for every game. A good rule of thumb is to assume everything that exists only in Starfinder is uncommon in Pathfinder, and vice versa. Rules elements that rely on ancestries, classes, deities, or equipment should be assumed rare, and you should analyze them carefully to make sure they fit your campaign's themes before allowing players to choose those options.

ANACHRONISTIC SIDE QUESTS

While this chapter is written under the assumption that anachronistic elements could become permanent fixtures in your campaign, oftentimes traditional fantasy and science fantasy have episodic, one-shot adventures that can transport the characters to another time or place. Anachronistic adventures should showcase stark differences in culture and technology. Whether the PCs were sent back in time for a single encounter or their next dungeon crawl is an alien spaceship abducting adventurers from other worlds, you can usually play a little looser with the rules knowing that any narrative incompatibilities will be resolved once your PCs get back home. Of course, you might want to let the PCs keep an artifact of the era they visited as a memento.

ADJUSTMENTS & TESTING

The guidelines presented here can be adjustment based on the themes, tone, setting, and length of your campaign. You might use adjustments to present the PCs with story-driven opportunities for making progress toward a goal, such as a hardware glitch that requires a piece of lost technology found in the alien warship's cargo hold, or an injury that prevents a PC from having a permanent fly Speed until they can find a spellcaster who can cast *regenerate* on their broken wings. However you approach these adjustments, communication is key, and most players appreciate an explanation out of character on how you're adjusting the rules to simulate time travel or anachronistic events.



TIMESHIFTED ADVENTURES

Pathfinder provides a vast trove of compatible resources for your next Starfinder campaign. Whether your campaign stars an entire group of time-displaced adventurers or just has a single character who really wants a cool item or spell, these guidelines help you navigate the process of figuring out which rules elements are most appropriate for your campaign and any challenges you should look out for when using Pathfinder content in a Starfinder campaign.

TIMESHIFTED HEROES

Starfinder and Pathfinder characters are built using the same fundamental process, and allowing both sets of rules opens up even more options. In this section, we've outlined guidelines for each of these steps. Ultimately it's up to the GM to determine what abilities and themes are most appropriate for their campaign. Here's some advice for creating timeshifted characters.

ANCESTRY

The ancestries and heritages from Lost Golarion still exist in the Pact Worlds, especially on Absalom Station, where many of them took refuge in the chaos after the amnesiac Gap. You should be able to use these options with minimal adjustments. If a character is from the Pact Worlds, you should be prepared to describe the character's home world, lifestyle, and culture. You might determine this lore yourself or allow players to collaborate, which can be a great way to build investment in the campaign. Changes to these details might inspire new ancestral weapons, languages, lore skills, or even heritages using those of other ancestries from the same planets or who remain in close contact with the Pathfinder ancestry. As many versatile heritages are created by the influence of interplanar exploration and unique circumstances that vary from character to character, most Pathfinder versatile heritages fit seamlessly into a Starfinder campaign.

Starfinder ancestry feats that modify movement speeds and senses might be initially stronger than Pathfinder options, as these abilities often come online at lower levels and are more easily available in Starfinder using armor upgrades, augmentations, and other equipment. You can discuss adjusting these ancestry feats to match the pace of feats from other existing Starfinder ancestries, but be wary

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of those with physiological disadvantages that are intended to offset their ability to fly or use special senses. The human ancestry is a good benchmark to compare other ancestries to, and to make sure there are no mitigating circumstances beyond these similar feats. Additional bonuses like a Lore skill proficiency can also help offset ancestry and heritage abilities like darkvision that Starfinder characters can get relatively cheaply as an augmentation or armor upgrade. You can also decide to add darkvision and flight to Pathfinder ancestries, choosing to balance the campaign by empowering all the players rather than taking options away.

BACKGROUND

While most Pathfinder backgrounds fit in the Starfinder setting, some that specialize in preindustrial skills might need to be updated–assuming the character is from the Starfinder era. This adjustment is especially important for skill feats and Lore skills that might not be relevant to your campaign, and these options should be reviewed as per the guidelines in the feat and skills sections (page 244). For characters using archaic methods, consider granting History Lore to reflect a character's knowledge in ancient traditions. When replacing a skill feat that doesn't fit a Starfinder campaign, you should look for other skill feats from the same skill or consider Assurance in one of the skills conferred by the background.

CLASS

The Pathfinder classes and archetypes both exist and are compatible within the Starfinder setting. When allowing multiclass archetypes between games, you should always be wary of allowing characters to mix Pathfinder and Starfinder class feats from classes that share similar roles. Class feats are balanced under the assumption that no other class in the game has access to these abilities, so neither game is prepared for the influx of similar abilities that could stack in unforeseen ways. Keeping a careful eye on which feats a PC wants to select should prevent game-breaking situations.

Class features that refer to specific types of gear, especially runes and firearms, need to be adjusted to fit Starfinder's technology. Pathfinder classes that use technology with a notable failure effect, such as firearms with a chance to misfire, should apply those rules when using that technology with feats or features balanced around that chance of failure. When using firearms, you'll want these especially risky actions to have a chance of a misfire to offset the increased range and magazine capacity of Starfinder weapons. These risks can be ignored when the character is using the equipment with actions available to a character of any other class.

Gear-dependent classes that Craft their own equipment are much more challenging to use with tech items, such as the alchemist and the inventor. While these characters can still function using Pathfinder gear, they might want to use a Starfinder class with the alchemist or inventor archetypes, after they get a taste of more advanced technology. These classes could easily adjust the theme of their key items as tech items without destabilizing the game. For example, an alchemist's bombs could be a type of grenade, and an inventor's innovation could be considered a suit of experimental technological armor.

KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

While many Pathfinder characters can adapt to the Starfinder setting with minimal mechanical adjustments, some might want to divest themselves of their archaic trappings and fully embrace the technology and techniques of the future. You might want to present this option early to your players so you can plan some downtime between levels where a PC could change classes. This would be a one-time exception to the rules that normally prevent changing classes, and you should only permit this when the two classes have similar themes. If the new class has a different key attribute, such as a fighter becoming a soldier, you should consider allowing them to retrain some of their attribute modifiers.

Classes with similar roles and features might overlap in ways that make players feel less valuable, for example, in the case of a bard playing with a rhythm connection mystic. Likewise, some classes might synergize in unexpected ways, such as bard, commander, and envoy stacking buffs on the same party. Parties with characters using classes that cover similar niches might find themselves struggling in some encounters, like an operative and a rogue being the primary damage dealers against a creature who's immune to precision damage. Be aware of these overlapping niches when designing campaigns and encounters to make sure they are a challenge without being impossible.

Archetypes tend to be more specific and can be more challenging to convert. For example, the eldritch archer (*Pathfinder Player Core 2* 198) could conceivably work with a gun, but it's also possible that certain spell combinations and Starfinder feats might destabilize the archetype in unexpected ways. If players want to choose archetypes like the talisman dabbler that rely on items that don't exist in Starfinder, you will need to convert those items into tech items or use a similar Starfinder equivalent instead. For example, a scroll trickster who got lost in the Dimension of Time and ended up on Absalom Station in the year 325 AG might learn how to use *spell gems* instead of scrolls for their class abilities.

DEITIES

Many of your favorite Pathfinder deities are still openly worshipped in Starfinder. Some have changed since the time before the Gap, and a character might be viewed with unusual curiosity or suspicion for their outdated views. Most deities still accept these followers, and if they're powerful clerics or the like, a god might even send guides to help their faithful find their way home. For example, Zon-Shelyn still cherishes those followers who refuse to acknowledge their fusion, appearing

in their separate forms when answering their prayers. Many deities also have updated their repertoire with tech weapons but still accept followers who use the ancient armaments of their church. Characters who gain proficiency in their deity's favored weapon should choose one or the other. So, a cleric of Besmara can choose to be trained in the breaching gun or the rapier, but not both. Once they do, this decision can only be changed by retraining, and any feats or spells that specify having to use a deity's favored weapon must select one or the other. For an adventure featuring a party that splits their time between eras, you might allow a character to swap their proficiency depending on the time period.

EQUIPMENT

Be wary of items that don't normally exist in Starfinder, especially alchemical items, talismans, and runes. Classes and archetypes that use these archaic items might instead use tech equivalents or not be allowed in the campaign. See Anachronistic Gear on page 252 for more information.

FEATS

Most of the skill and general feats from Pathfinder can be used in Starfinder without any challenges. PCs should avoid feats that rely on incompatible equipment that might be difficult to obtain in the Starfinder setting. Alchemy has been supplanted by grenades and pharmaceuticals, while scrolls and wands have been replaced by *spell gems* and *spell chips*, and runes have been replaced by upgrades and the item grade system (commercial, tactical, and so on). Additionally, PCs should be aware of augmentations and tech gear that can make certain feats superfluous, especially those that provide new movement speeds and senses. These feats might still prove useful in campaigns where players don't have reliable access to their technology and for characters who can't spare the slots for additional augmentations and equipment upgrades.

Technology has also made some skill feats less useful. The Legendary Linguist feat still has its uses in campaigns exploring uncontacted worlds, but within the Pact Worlds, most PCs can get by through purchasing a translator app and investing in the lower-level Digital Ambassador skill feat. The theme of the campaign should always be considered. For example, players investing in Survival will appreciate being told beforehand that the campaign will likely not include wilderness adventures but might include some interplanar or urban survival.



SKILLS

Starfinder has two skills not available in Pathfinder: Computers and Piloting. The Piloting skill replaces Driving Lore and Sailing Lore, and any archetypes, equipment, or feats that used these skills should use Piloting instead. While there's no direct analogue to the Computers skill, the GM might allow PCs to use similar skills, such as Occultism or Thievery, to accomplish similar tasks until they have an opportunity to gain proficiency in these skills. A GM should consider finding an opportunity for PCs built using Pathfinder rules to retrain skill proficiency choices into Computers or Piloting.

Lore skills should be considered based on the theme of the campaign, and some specific lores players could gain from backgrounds and ancestry feats might not be applicable for use in a Starfinder campaign. Switching those to another vaguely related lore, such as Hellknight Lore instead of Cheliax Lore, or a broader lore, such as Golarion Lore or History Lore instead of Cheliax Lore, can help make the skill more relevant for your campaign.

SPELLS

The sheer volume of spells printed in both the Starfinder and Pathfinder *Player Core* rulebooks represents the timeless nature of magic's universal efficacy. That said, many Pathfinder spells that modify equipment can cause problems in Starfinder, especially those that apply armor and weapon runes, which aren't effective on Starfinder equipment. Furthermore, spellcasters selecting non-damaging spells should spend

some time reviewing Starfinder options, as abilities like darkvision, flight, and other utility options might be necessary to compete with the augmentations and other tech items that can affordably replicate these spell effects, or might become less desirable choices because of the existence of such technology.

STARFINDER ADVENTURES

While Pathfinder and Starfinder both lend themselves to high-fantasy adventures, there are differences that should be considered when importing a Pathfinder character into the Starfinder setting. Most of this advice is intended for games that include one or more characters transported from the past or from a world with the same level of technology as the Lost Omens setting.

TECHNOLOGY

The difference in technology between the Starfinder and Pathfinder settings creates great opportunities for roleplaying and environmental storytelling. Describing technology without using modern terminology can help facilitate the alien nature of a new world, and many GMs might find it helpful to write out these descriptions in advance to keep the game's pace snappy, even if they improvise when the time comes to explain. While this storytelling technique can be fun for a couple sessions, most technology is engineered to be picked up relatively quickly by end-level consumers, and it shouldn't take long for an anachronistic character to pick up on the cues more tech-savvy characters take for granted. While roleplaying a character who rejects technology can make for some fun story beats, in long-running Starfinder campaigns, this type of character is best avoided or subverted for the sake of giving all PCs access to the advanced tech equipment that creatures and hazards assume everyone has access to and uses. You can find more guidelines on using anachronistic equipment in the Anachronistic Gear section on page 252.

DOWNTIME

Life in a post-scarcity civilization like the Pact Worlds offers many more opportunities for leisure time than life on worlds like our own. While the rules of downtime activities are largely the same in both eras, there are additional innate rewards and risks inherent to these activities in Starfinder that might come as a surprise to an archaic character. Finding specific equipment, information, teachers, translators, and other specialists is significantly easier on the infosphere. This also means that it's easier for others to find information about the PCs, which can make it more challenging to avoid or circumvent the outcomes of certain critical failures, such as being caught stealing or believing a lie on the infosphere that a more experienced browser would've realized was just an attempt at trolling. Options from Pathfinder that provide additional downtime activities should keep these circumstances in mind, and you might consider dropping warnings if a PC attempts to go ahead with an activity without accounting for the perils of technology, such as using the infosphere recklessly or ignoring security cameras.

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

While these rules are written under the assumption that you're playing a Pathfinder character in the Starfinder setting (or vice versa), there are generations of social and technological growth between the two eras! You can adjust these rules to account for characters from a post-industrial but pre-spacefaring era, including characters from our own time here on Earth! Finding a middle ground between the two rules might seem daunting, but plenty of technology and classes from both games can be adapted to fit characters from a contemporary setting with very few adjustments and have an arguably easier time adjusting to life in the Starfinder setting.

CRAFTING

While both games use similar rules for Crafting, it's faster for a character to Craft items in Starfinder than in Pathfinder. The Fabricator skill feat allows PCs to use creator capsules to 3D print gear in hours instead of days, which is especially useful for characters needing to replenish consumable items like ammunition and grenades. It also gives the party freedom to venture farther from their ports of call since they don't need to sell their loot and upgrade their gear after every caper. While item formulas are still necessary for high-level gear, PCs can access these formulas much more easily using the infosphere. In addition, the maker's app is an affordable tech item that has the formula for any piece of adventuring gear. Alchemical items no longer exist in Starfinder, but many characters interested in those items might consider the Serum Crafting skill feat.

SKILL CHECKS

Including Pathfinder characters in a Starfinder adventure might mean having a narrower band of skills until the characters get acclimated to the Starfinder setting. You should double-check your skill encounters and hazards to make sure that there are still ways for the party to progress in the event that no one is trained in skills like Computers and Piloting. A Crafting or Thievery check can sometimes replace a Computers check, especially when the solution involves hardware. For checks involving data, characters might be able to get by using Arcana or Occultism, especially if it involves using logic, such as deciphering computer code. Instead of a Piloting check, you could let multiple PCs attempt the check using Perception and Survival. If you plan on continuing these skill checks in future sessions, you should consider using the narrative to create a sense of risk that encourages your PCs to invest in new skills as soon as possible, or at least hire a hacker or pilot to tag along and help teach them the ropes!

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ARCHAIC ADVENTURES

Compatibility with Pathfinder means you can mix your favorite Starfinder ancestries, classes, and more with the dozens of adventures and sourcebooks available for Pathfinder! Whether Starfinders are thrust back in time and trying to survive on Lost Golarion or you want to run a classic Pathfinder Adventure Path using Starfinder characters, GMs can use the guidelines presented here to help make an unforgettable campaign!

ARCHAIC HEROES

System compatibility makes it easy for your PCs to seamlessly utilize their favorite Starfinder options in a Pathfinder campaign. But Starfinder has certain assumptions that Pathfinder does not, and transferring mechanics from one game to another might require some tinkering.

ANCESTRY

While many of the ancestries who visited the Pact Worlds after the Gap would've been unheard of on ancient Golarion, there is no shortage of opportunities to include your favorite aliens in the Lost Omens setting. From the galaxy-spanning elven *aiudara* gates to the spacefaring Azlanti Star Empire, having an ancient civilization return from other worlds with other species in tow is just one of the countless ways you can incorporate a species from beyond the stars in your Pathfinder adventures. There are also Starfinder-exclusive heritage options for existing Pathfinder ancestries, but whether using an ancestry or heritage, you should be aware of the nuanced mechanical differences between the two games.

Darkvision and other forms of special senses are much more common in Starfinder than Pathfinder. While some GMs might wish to incorporate items from Starfinder to make up the difference, you might want to adjust the Starfinder ancestries and ancestry feats that confer special forms of vision by lowering the range or raising the level of the feat that confers the special sense. You should also be wary of special movement speeds, such as climbing and flight, that become available at a much lower level in Starfinder. While some Pathfinder adventures might not mind the low-level access to these speeds, you might want to adjust by instead using the progression of movement speed-related ancestry feats presented to other ancestries in Pathfinder.

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BACKGROUND

Most backgrounds from *Starfinder Player Core* work fine with minimal flavor adjustment in Pathfinder. Some offer feats that won't serve any purpose in your setting, such as the Augmented Body feat in a game with no augmentations. Others have contemporary narratives that make them inappropriate for high-fantasy games, such as electrician or hacker. Backgrounds like brutaris player, dream prophet, and icon might just need some minor thematic adjustments to fit your setting, while those like diplomat and smuggler should work fine with no adjustments.

CLASS

While Starfinder classes are rules compatible with Pathfinder, you might make minor thematic or even mechanical adjustments depending on the themes of your specific campaign. All the classes could have minor adjustments to existing flavor, including the names of feats that reference technology, without mechanical impact on the abilities themselves.

Envoys are easy to use in a Pathfinder campaign with minimal adjustments. They make for great support characters without the use of magic and can help support a martial party with directives and bonuses whether they're using firearms or swords. You may run into unforeseen issues with stacking bonuses and penalties if there's a commander, bard, or similar support class in the party. The hotshot and infosphere director leadership styles require the use of vehicles and computers, which can be a bit complicated.

Mystics are easy to use in a Pathfinder campaign with minimal adjustments. This class is ideal for characters wanting to play spontaneous support casters, especially in a party with only one or two undead PCs, as the mystic can use their vitality network to heal them as well. Some campaigns might want to limit the telepathy of the mystic, especially survival horror and intrigue campaigns where this ability could cause disruptions. Review spells for more information about potentially conflicting mechanics, many of which might be conferred by mystic feats and features.

Operatives can be used in a Pathfinder campaign with some minor adjustments. These consistent damage dealers can utilize high mobility to fight at ideal distances with a multitude of ranged weapons. Which Pathfinder weapons qualify as a gun should be discussed with the player and depend on the operative's specialization. In an anachronistic adventure, consider allowing operatives to use Aim and other class features with all ranged weapons, even if they don't have the analog or tech trait. Operatives perform best with modern guns. Archaic firearms have a chance to misfire and take longer to reload, but they often have powerful traits like fatal to make up for it. The presence of an operative in a party might skew encounters in the direction of ranged combat, and GMs could consider giving their creatures enhancements for movement speed or ranged options if the party begins to exploit this preference of fighting at a distance. Many operatives also rely on being able to shoot multiple times before having to reload, and allowing them access to rare multi-magazine firearms using the statistics of those from Starfinder might be necessary for them to keep up with other damage dealers in the party.

TIME TRAVEL

One of the biggest risks of time travel is being exposed as a time traveler. Even seemingly mundane and widespread information from the distant future can be invaluable to those who'd take advantage of it. Knowing this and keeping your identity secret is the first step to making sure the information stays out of the wrong hands, but the following plot elements can help secure the future of your setting, unless of course you want that to be an element of your campaign.

- The Gap can serve as a plot device that supernaturally alters or censors sensitive information.
- Gods or fate itself might intervene after you return to your timeline, so the only changes are details so minor even the history books stay the same.
- Time travel might have thrust you into a completely new reality that doesn't impact your home timeline.
- People might just not believe you're from the future.

Solarians are easy to use in a Pathfinder campaign with no adjustments. Channeling the power of the cosmos is a classic high-fantasy theme, and many players will enjoy being able to play a supernatural warrior who constructs their own weapons on the fly. You might consider adjusting specific movement abilities until these options would normally be available to spellcasters in your game. Channeling the cosmos and maintaining spiritual balance are timeless themes that can be freely explored using archaic characters without any major concerns.

Soldiers can present certain challenges in Pathfinder campaigns and might require some adjustments. Whether scavenged from an ancient alien ship, taken with you from the future, or ancient relics repurposed by an inventor, allowing your soldier access to area weapons addresses most of these concerns. Groups not looking to employ scrap launchers or alchemical flamethrowers might want to limit a soldier to using the Whirling Swipe feat as their source of area attacks. Soldiers with ranged area attacks in a Pathfinder game might be a little oppressive against melee-heavy creatures, and you might want to toggle the suppressed condition to only reduce the enemy's Speeds by 5 feet at earlier levels, perhaps increasing it to 10 feet when the soldier gets weapon specialization.

Witchwarpers are easy to use in a Pathfinder campaign with minimal adjustments. Many players enjoy being able to manipulate the battlefield while playing a high-mobility caster. The analyst anchor and precog need new paradox skills depending on the background of the individual character and the source of their power in your campaign. Check the spells section for more information about potentially conflicting mechanics, many of which might be conferred by witchwarper feats and features.

DEITIES

Most deities from Starfinder were still active prior to the Gap, although those who are too distant from Golarion to interfere directly might be ideal for time-traveling PCs for continuity's sake. Those with deities who undergo significant changes in the future might find themselves without access to their original deity, instead drawing powers from an unknown patron who might be using the PC for their own purposes. In some cases, even the patron deity might not understand why they're drawn to the mortal until everything is said and done.

EQUIPMENT

Without access to advanced technology, many Starfinder classes have to rely on Pathfinder equivalents to properly function. In the Lost Omens setting, players might need to rely on technology from specific niche sources like alien technology from Numeria, relics from the Jistka Imperium, and experimental weapons forged in Alkenstar. Alchemical and magical solutions might also exist, but the item's traits would need some adjustment. Groups looking for a challenge might want to deny their players access to solar charging stations and might demand that players spend downtime to maintain or recharge their gear, or else incur the glitching condition on a critical failure. While many of Starfinder's items aren't easily integrated into most Pathfinder campaigns, there are opportunities to use this alien technology in your game without having to convert everything into a magic item equivalent, guidelines for which can be found in Anachronistic Gear (page 252).



Early on in a campaign, time-traveling characters might struggle to make ends meet, unless they happen to be antique coin collectors. The balance on a credstick is meaningless in a civilization without computers, but even the most mundane tech gear could be worth a king's ransom to collectors. A spare firearm, jet pack, or even datapad is likely worth many times more than what it would be in Starfinder, assuming you can find the right buyer. This kind of exchange can be especially helpful if a Starfinder character is being introduced to a Pathfinder campaign above 1st level, but the player wants the character to be completely out of their element. It can also serve as a fun narrative device when an eccentric noble finds their toy running low on battery power and demands a refund from the hapless time traveler!

FEATS

Most of the skill and general feats from Starfinder can be used in Pathfinder without any adjustment. Feats that refer to specific technology that might not exist in your setting might not be appropriate for your campaign, including Augmented Body, and many of the Crafting and Computers skill feats. Feats that rely on comm units or the infosphere, such as Master Troll or Digital Ambassador, would be applicable only if a magic item were introduced with similar features specifically for that feat. Piloting skill feats would require using Driving Lore or adjusting the vehicle rules in your game and should only be accessible if you plan on making vehicles a major component of your campaign. Feats that deal with technology might still be appropriate for a Pathfinder campaign with some adjustments, especially those that heavily feature alien technology or constructs.

SKILLS

Most Pathfinder adventures won't include the Computers or Piloting skills, making options that rely on these skills superfluous on the surface. Options that grant training or boosts in these skills should instead use other related skills, such as Driving Lore, Sailing Lore, or Survival for Piloting and Crafting, Mathematics Lore, and Thievery for Computers. Allowing your characters to use Piloting to Drive any kind of vehicle might help simplify games that heavily feature vehicles, but be cautious about encouraging the Piloting skill if you don't plan on featuring vehicles in your campaign.

SPELLS

Spells that require the use of technology, such as *motivating ringtone*, might be challenging to use in a Pathfinder campaign if you don't also allow the associated technology itself. Magic items can help bridge the divide and work as replacements, such as a special *wayfinder* that can play music instead of a comm unit. Spells that refer to robots might refer to constructs instead if your campaign doesn't include robotic foes as part of its theme. Depending on your group's preference, your players might appreciate picking new names for spells that use contemporary or futuristic names. Alternatively, you could justify the names by claiming they're rough translations of spells developed on other worlds, such as by the elves of Castrovel or elementals on the Plane of Metal.

You should pay special attention to the inclusion of spells that grant special senses and movement speeds, such as polymorph spells, *skyfire wings*, and *wild bond*. You might want to adjust spells that grant these abilities to be a rank higher to account for the mobility assumptions of Pathfinder encounter design. Spells that modify gravity, radiation, and other Starfinder environmental effects might also be unwieldy in Pathfinder campaigns when other creatures and player characters don't have access to the same feats, gear, resistances, and spells that help them navigate and survive these environments. If you're playing a low-tech game, spells that engage virtual reality, such as *new game*, might instead function using illusions, dreams, interplanar travel,

or mindscapes and will need adjustments, such as additional traits or requirements, to properly function.

PATHFINDER ADVENTURES

From Alkenstar to Numeria, the Lost Omens campaign setting has a number of locales with burgeoning, alien, or lost technology integrated into a high-fantasy world. While technology is the first thing most people consider when combining elements of the two systems, there are other considerations one must take into account when running Pathfinder adventures for Starfinder characters.

TECHNOLOGY

Starfinder player characters are assumed to have unfettered access to advanced technology. Many of the challenges in Pathfinder adventures assume your characters don't have access to this technology, and those abilities will either need to be adjusted, restricted, or the technology brought forward into your Pathfinder game. Make sure to inform your players in advance if you plan on setting firm limits on the use of the technology, such as batteries that need charging or the need to Craft your own ammunition. Maintaining tech gear is going to take a significant amount of time and effort, and the frustration of trying to make do with archaic equipment might be why the PC adventures in the first place. For more information on how Starfinder characters can use Pathfinder gear, see Anachronistic Gear (page 252).

DOWNTIME

Starfinder PCs who spend their leisure time playing vidgames and checking out local clubs might find it challenging to adapt to life in a preindustrial setting. Fortunately, there's so much a timeshifted character would need to do to adapt to life in the past that they might not have the time to think about it! Some players might love the opportunity to roleplay a stranger in a strange land, perhaps even wanting to spend some downtime learning local languages and customs. Cooking, crafting, healing, and shopping can all become substantially more time-consuming without the use of scientifically advanced technology, and the frustration of not having access to the magic that could emulate that technology can be a great motivator!

CRAFTING

A Starfinder character might want to spend a significant portion of their downtime crafting. This can mean repairing and maintaining their futuristic gear, such as making ammunition and using archaic tools like waterwheels to recharge their batteries. It can also mean figuring out how to upgrade their gear without access to AbadarCorp's free online shipping and many convenient locations. Doing so could require finding an NPC who can do the actual checks behind the scenes while the PC is off on adventures, especially if the PC doesn't have ranks in Crafting. It could also mean working alongside another PC, perhaps allowing the Starfinder PC to help the NPC Craft by teaching them the basics of the advanced technology. You might even find yourself limiting a player's access to higher-level tech gear by forcing them to find necessary materials, from rare minerals to Numerian artifacts, that require specific adventures to acquire!

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Even if the mechanics fit your campaign, the names of some feats and spells in Starfinder might feel too modern or futuristic for some players. If your players prefer, you can always adjust feats, spells, and other rules to use more archaic terms. You should rename only abilities your players will use, and letting your players choose the names can make this a bonus perk instead of a chore. You might even want to keep the old names until the abilities are used, so the new name can develop naturally as you play the game. You can even incorporate a bit of PC backstory or campaign themes into the names of these abilities, such as a technique developed exclusively by a certain faction or the name of the character who first used the ability.

SKILL CHECKS

Characters from a time or world with more pervasive high-technology solutions to everyday problems might find it challenging to adapt to life in a more agrarian setting. Capturing that struggle with extraneous skill challenges could enhance the verisimilitude of your game, but over time, most characters should be able to adapt to how things are done in the pre-modern world. You should avoid trying to unduly punish players for wanting to play characters with themes, instead using the story to help explain how a PC failed or critically failed a check rather than giving them a numerical penalty to the check itself. For example, if a time-displaced Zemir rolled a 1 on his check to Influence a local celebrity with a Diplomacy check, the GM could explain that he confused the diva by asking for their social media contacts.

You should inform your characters in advance whether or not the Computers and Piloting skills are appropriate in your game. Pathfinder games that use a lot of vehicles might appreciate having a universal skill rather than having to rely on different Lore skills to Drive. Computers and other Lore skills that might be less applicable to a Pathfinder game should be adjusted on a one-for-one basis with some thought given to the nature of the adventure. Backgrounds are often a great source of inspiration for finding equivalent Lore skills. If you need some ideas, many published adventures have guides that include lists of useful skills as well as backgrounds that include Lore skills often used in those campaigns and campaigns set in the same region of Golarion.

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ANACHRONISTIC CREATURES

From *Pathfinder Monster Core* to its countless Adventure Paths, Pathfinder has hundreds of incredible creatures you can use in your Starfinder campaign with minimal adjustment. These guidelines can help you incorporate these monsters with minimal concern. Following these guidelines will help you easily convert a creature, encounter, or even entire adventure into your Starfinder game!

Since Starfinder exists in the future of the Lost Omens setting, most creatures from Pathfinder probably lurk somewhere in the Starfinder universe, whether preserved from Lost Golarion deep in the Ghost Levels of Absalom Station, whisked away by fey or other extraplanar collectors, or genetically engineered to amuse guests at the Golarion World theme park. These guidelines can help you modify Pathfinder creatures to use in your Starfinder campaign.

DAMAGE TYPES

Characters can generally access a wider variety of damage types in Starfinder. You should make a mental note if you have any characters in your game with a limited repertoire of damage, as creatures with resistance or weaknesses to a party's primary form of damage can make an encounter too easy or too hard. Fire weakness and vulnerability are particularly commonplace and easy to trigger using Starfinder weapons, especially lasers and explosives.

ENVIRONMENT

Starfinder encounters are more likely to occur in environments with effects like radioactivity that most Pathfinder creatures were never designed to interact with. If your encounter takes place in space, the creatures and NPCs need armor with environmental protections or the cosmic trait to survive. If your encounter uses radiation, the creature should have it listed as an immunity, have a resistance to poison damage, or have the assumed damage and sickened conditions built into their stat block in advance so you don't need to apply it during the encounter.

Creatures inhabiting starships should have some way to survive. If intelligent, they should have a useful skill like Computers or Crafting. More feral creatures might inhabit vents or trash compactors and could have an ability like compression or a garbage spew ranged attack that helps make the creature more thematically appropriate. Likewise, creatures adapted to new worlds should have abilities that allow them to not only survive but thrive on those worlds in one or more ecological

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niches. A fast and easy way to approach adaptation is to look for another creature from the same world in *Alien Core* and skim its stat block for any abilities that help it survive the challenges of its home. For example, creatures from space usually have the cosmic trait and some resistance to cold damage, representing their ability to survive in the void.

EQUIPMENT

Most intelligent creatures and NPCs in Starfinder carry tech gear. You should consider upgrading the armor and weapons wielded by such creatures in Pathfinder to their Starfinder equivalents. While the weapons could use the same statistics, applying the analog or tech trait makes it usable with the weapon grade system rather than needing compatible runes to upgrade. There are also spells and feats, such as Combat Hack, that only work if enemies have modern tech equipment. Note that while most people in the Pact Worlds carry a computer in the form of a comm unit or datapad, all tech armor has an integrated comm unit that makes carrying an additional communication device superfluous (but not unheard of). Giving a Pathfinder creature a gun is also an easy way to apply a simple but effective ranged attack if the creature didn't already have one—the image of a troll with a machine gun will stick with your players. Including tech gear in enemy stat blocks also gives the PCs ammunition (and batteries) to loot after the combat.

The integrated trait allows for equipment that players can't easily reuse in the midst of a series of encounters, although depending on the nature of the weapon and its integration with the creature, it might be salvageable with the Scavenger feat. In many cases, even the Scavenger feat isn't enough to allow a character to loot an integrated piece of gear, such as an integrated jetpack that uses a fire-breathing creature's internal flames to keep it aloft.

MOVEMENT SPEED

Many Starfinder characters have access to flight and use ranged weapons that can cut an encounter with typical Pathfinder creatures short. Giving creatures additions like grafted wings or integrated jetpacks allows them to use melee tactics against flying PCs. Consider giving them other ways to close the gap, like a climb Speed or teleportation. When designing encounters, include environmental features like wind, platforms, and variable gravity.

RANGED ATTACKS

Give most Pathfinder creatures a ranged attack. If a simple ranged attack isn't enough to deal with flying or distant foes, consider solutions that don't use extra actions such as Improved Grab, Improved Knockdown, or an accompanying hazard to that can pull the PCs closer.

SUMMONING ADJUSTMENTS

You should be wary of allowing players to summon creatures from Starfinder in low-level Pathfinder games. Double check to make sure any spells the creatures can cast and equipment they carry match the themes and tone of your game. Also keep in mind the efficacy of the creature's movement speeds and ranged attacks in low-level games, comparing them with Pathfinder equivalents if you find the summons are overwhelming your encounters. You might create an ongoing rule that all Starfinder creatures have the uncommon or rare trait to prevent summoning in your games.





ANACHRONISTIC GEAR

From an operative assassin with ancient sawtooth sabers to a mystic healer wielding a magical staff, many Starfinder characters would love to get their hands (or alien appendages) on ancient Pathfinder gear. Whether you're introducing them to your campaign as standard tools of the trade, artifacts from before the Gap, or specialty tools favored by hobby enthusiasts, these guidelines can help you decide the best way to handle using Pathfinder equipment in your Starfinder game.

ITEM GRADES

The ellicoth in the room when discussing implementing Pathfinder gear is item grades. In Starfinder, items are improved by buying or crafting upgrades to your gear to progress them from commercial to paragon grade. While this consolidates and simplifies the terminology used to describe magic armor and other magic items, it does mean that certain abilities that refer to grades of gear might not function with Pathfinder items that are otherwise acceptable inclusions into a Starfinder campaign.

By default, all equipment from Pathfinder has the archaic trait to distinguish it from equipment made using modern crafting techniques and technology. Archaic armor and weapons aren't analog or tech and can't be upgraded like normal equipment. You could simply allow characters with Pathfinder equipment to apply runes, as some crafters still know these ancient techniques. Alternatively, you could modify equipment without runes in the process of upgrading it. By spending an additional week and paying half the base Price of the equipment, you could install the technology required to apply upgrades, integrate tech like comm units and environmental protections into armor, and add upgrade slots to shields and weapons. In the case of armor, you can even allow players to pay only half the base price by giving the armor the exposed trait, denying themselves the benefits of environmental protections. The end result would be a commercial grade piece of equipment with the tech trait and one upgrade slot.

AMMUNITION

Ammunition for archaic weapons shouldn't be too difficult to craft or obtain. Crossbow bolts and arrows are still in production and used across the Pact Worlds by athletes, hunters, and adventurers who value the reliability and silence

of ranged analog weaponry. Flintlock and black powder weapons are still collected and fired by enthusiasts, and the construction of these weapons is relatively simple. Blowguns and other injecting weapons function with the same darts as the needler pistol. Markets on low-tech worlds are more likely to carry these items, but they can be found just about anywhere.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

Most other varieties of equipment in Pathfinder have Starfinder equivalents, and it should be relatively simple to adjudicate their use. *Spell gems* can function like scrolls, serums like potions, and so on. You should always warn your players that specific interactions of converted equipment with other items and feats are always subject to change. For example, you might rule that the alchemical flasks awarded by defeating a time-displaced alchemist can function as detailed in the appropriate Pathfinder source book, but you should also keep in mind if such items will be a suitable reward and could perhaps instead choose to have them operate as grenades. It's usually best to wait until after a session to make any on-the-fly adjustments. Your players will likely remember the encounter where they took out a pair of vesk honor guards with a glue bomb fired out of a fireburst chamber!

USABILITY GUIDELINE

The rules here, like those elsewhere in this chapter, are guidelines for how to mix elements of both Pathfinder and Starfinder together. Exactly how this type of equipment works between game systems is up to the GM or is detailed in specific products that broach this topic. The rules herein should be considered optional rules. These rules aren't enabled by default for a campaign unless the GM and players are all in agreement. In effect, timeshifted equipment should generally be considered uncommon options.

CURRENCY

The standard currency in Starfinder is the credit. In Pathfinder, the standard currency is typically in gold or silver pieces. The conversion rate between credits and gold pieces is 10 credits for every gold piece, or 1 credit for every silver piece. For logistical and security purposes, most businesses in the Pact Worlds won't take antique coins as a method of payment, but between AbadarCorp and antique collectors, exchanging your currency for something more convenient shouldn't be a problem.

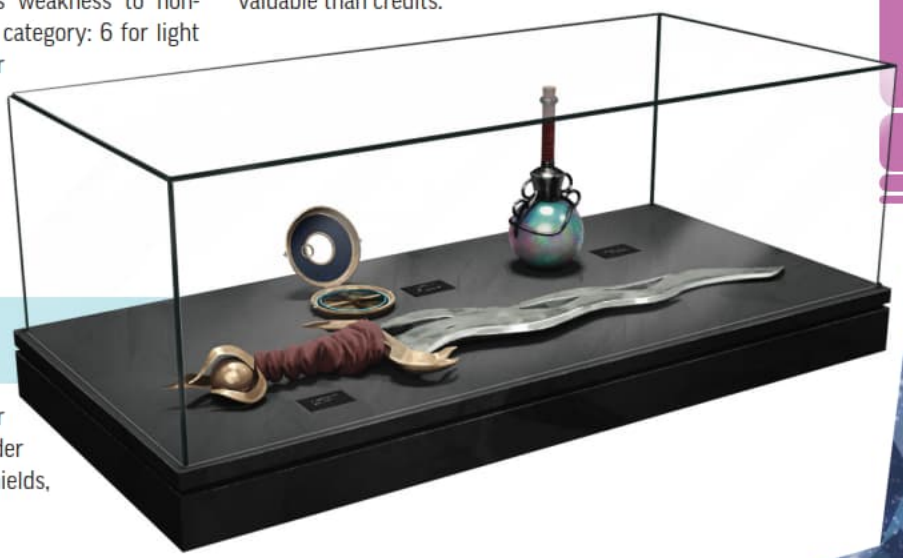
OPTIONAL RULE: ARCHAIC EQUIPMENT

Whether worn by the ravages of time or simply made from inferior materials, some campaigns might mechanically emphasize the difference between modern and ancient equipment. You can adopt the following guidelines in a campaign intended to emphasize the struggles of fighting a force with vastly superior technology. These rules don't apply to unarmed attacks and equipment made using high-grade precious materials.

- The Broken Threshold (BT) of equipment with the archaic trait equals three-quarters of its maximum Hit Points, causing it to gain the broken condition when it takes damage equal to a quarter of its total Hit Points (instead of half).
- Armor with the archaic trait has weakness to non-archaic weapons depending on its category: 6 for light armor, 4 for medium armor, or 2 for heavy armor.
- Unless you score a critical hit, weapons with the archaic trait deal one lower die size of damage against armor without the archaic trait (minimum 1d4).

TREASURE & REWARDS

Some ancient treasure from Pathfinder might not feel appropriate in a Starfinder campaign, especially magic armor, shields, weapons, and alchemical consumables. Treating these treasures as antique gear rather than converting them to the Starfinder-grade equivalents introduces a new type of precious treasure that can be sold to collectors. The infosphere makes finding such collectors a relatively simple task, unless the item is prohibited for sale for some reason. But be careful, selling valuable rare items might put the PCs in the crosshairs of thieves or predatory investors! PCs might appreciate being able to sell lower-level ancient consumables to collectors, but make sure to adjust other story rewards if you're allowing players to effectively sell this gear at full price. Some PCs might feel uncomfortable selling artifacts to private collections and might demand they belong in a museum, or with the culture that crafted them, for there are rewards more valuable than credits.



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Abadar (deity) 200, *PC* 35
AbadarCorp (faction) 198, *GG* 106–108
Abaddon (plane) 188–189
Aballon (world) 152–153
aberration (trait) Aberrations are creatures from beyond the planes or corruptions of the natural order.
Absalom Station (world) 156–157
Access Infosphere (exploration activity) 41, *PC* 195–196
acid (damage type) *PC* 401
acid (trait) Effects with this trait deal acid damage. Creatures with this trait have a connection to magical acid.
acid rain (natural disaster) 99
aeon (trait) These monitors are the self-styled defenders of reality. Traditional aeons have dualistic natures and forms, hold a dichotomy of interests, and communicate via a strange telepathic hodgepodge of sensory sending called envisioning. Axiomites and their creations are aeons, but don't share all the characteristics of traditional aeons.
affliction An affliction can affect a creature for a long time, over several different stages. The most common kinds are curses, diseases, and poisons. 88–91, *PC* 422–423
air (trait) Effects with the air trait either manipulate or conjure air. Those that manipulate air have no effect in a vacuum or an area without air. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of air or have a connection to magical air. 183
Akashic Record (dimension) 191
Akashic Society (faction) 199, *GG* 124
Akiton (world) 158–159
anachronistic creatures 250–251
anachronistic gear 252–253
ancestry paragon (variant) 86
android 192
angel (trait) This family of celestials is native to the plane of Nirvana. Most angels are holy, have darkvision, and have a weakness to unholy.
animal (trait) An animal is a creature with a relatively low intelligence. It typically doesn't have an Intelligence attribute modifier over –4, can't speak languages, and can't be trained in Intelligence-based skills.
Apostae (world) 174–175
arcane (trait) This magic comes from the arcane tradition, which is built on logic and rationality. Anything with this trait is magical.
archaic adventures 246–249
archaic equipment (optional rule) 253
archon (trait) Members of this family of celestials are the protectors of Heaven and are holy. They have darkvision and a weakness to unholy.
astral (trait) Astral creatures are native of the Astral Plane. They can survive the basic environmental effects of the Astral Plane.
Astral Plane (plane) 187
astrazoan 194, *GG* 128–135
atheism 203
auditory (trait) Auditory actions and effects rely on sound. An action with the auditory trait can be successfully performed only if the creature using the action can speak or otherwise produce the required sounds. A spell or effect with the auditory trait has its effect only if the target can hear it. This applies only to sound-based parts of the effect, as determined by the GM. This is different from a sonic effect, which still affects targets who can't hear it (such as deaf targets) as long as the effect itself makes sound.
automatic bonus progression (variant) 83
avalanche (natural disaster) 99–100
Axis (plane) 189
azata (trait) This family of celestials is native to Elysium. They are typically holy and have darkvision and a weakness to cold iron and unholy.
Azlanti Star Empire (faction) 180–181, 196
barathu 192, *PC* 46–49
Battle Saints 203
beast (trait) A creature similar to an animal but with an Intelligence modifier of –3 or higher is usually a beast. Unlike an animal, a beast might be able to speak and reason.
Besmara (deity) 200, *PC* 35
bleed (damage type) A type of persistent damage. *PC* 401
blizzard (natural disaster) 100
bludgeoning (damage type) A type of physical damage. *PC* 401
Boneyard (plane) 189
Bretheda (world) 172–173
Castrovel (world) 154–155
celestial (trait) Creatures that hail from or have a strong connection to the holy planes are called celestials. Celestials can survive the basic environmental effects of planes in the Outer Sphere.
chase (subsystem) A short-term subsystem wherein the PCs progress through various situations and obstacles. 214–217
cinematic starship scenes (subsystem) a mid-term subsystem wherein PCs operate a starship. 226–233
starship design 229–230
cold (damage type) *PC* 401
cold (trait) Effects with this trait deal cold damage. Creatures with this trait have a connection to magical cold.
collapse (natural disaster) 100
complex (trait) A hazard with this trait takes turns in an encounter.
concentrate (trait) An action with this trait requires a degree of mental concentration and discipline.
construct (trait) A construct is an artificial creature empowered by a force other than vitality or void. Constructs are often mindless; they're immune to bleed damage, death effects,

disease, healing, nonlethal attacks, poison, vitality, void, and the doomed, drained, fatigued, paralyzed, sickened, and unconscious conditions; and they might have Hardness based on the materials used to construct their bodies. Constructs are not living creatures, nor are they undead. When reduced to 0 Hit Points, a construct creature is destroyed.
consumable (trait) An item with this trait can be used only once. Unless stated otherwise, it's destroyed after activation. Consumable items include serums and magical consumables such as spell ampoules and spell gems. When a character creates consumable items, they can make them in batches of four.
contemplative 194, *GG* 136–143
Corpse Fleet 196, *GG* 124
cosmic (trait) Creatures with this trait can survive in the harsh vacuum of space and the vast distances between planets and stars. They don't breathe while in space or in a vacuum. Creatures with this trait can use their Fly Speed to Fly normally in a vacuum or zero-gravity environment. Unless the creature possesses a bespoke ability (such as No Breath), they remain susceptible to effects that require breathing while in normal atmosphere.
Creation's Forge (plane) 184–185
Cult of the Devourer 196
curses 88–90
Cycle, the 203
daemon (trait) A family of fiends spawned on the desolate plane of Abaddon, most daemons are unholy. They typically have darkvision and weakness to holy.
Damoritosh (deity) 200, *PC* 35
Deep Cultures Institute (faction) 199, *GG* 124
demon (trait) A family of fiends, demons hail from or trace their origins to the Outer Rifts. Most are irredeemably unholy and have darkvision.
Detect Magic (exploration activity) 41, *PC* 430–431
devil (trait) A family of fiends from Hell, most devils are irredeemably unholy. They typically have greater darkvision, immunity to fire, and telepathy.
Devourer (deity) 200, *PC* 35–36
Diaspora, the (world) 164–165
difficult terrain It costs 5 extra feet of movement to enter a space of difficult terrain, or 10 extra for greater difficult terrain. 94, *PC* 415
Difficulty Class (DC) The number you need to succeed at a check. To generate a DC from a modifier (like Perception DC), add 10 to the modifier. 52–55, *PC* 393
Dimension of Time (dimension) 191
diseases 90–91
divine (trait) This magic comes from the divine tradition, drawing power from deities or similar sources. Anything with this trait is magical.
doors and walls 95–97
dragon (trait) Dragons are reptilian creatures, often winged or with the power of flight. Most can exhale magical energy.
dragonkin 194, *GG* 144–151
Drift, the (plane) A hyperspace plane revealed by Triune allowing swift travel between beacons. 187
drift (trait) Creatures with this trait have a connection to the drift and typically have the cosmic trait.
dwarf (ancient species) 194
earth (trait) Effects with the earth trait either manipulate or conjure earth. Those that manipulate earth have no effect in an area without earth. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of earth or have a connection to magical earth. 183
earthquake (natural disaster) 100
electricity (damage type) *PC* 401
electricity (trait) Effects with this trait deal electricity damage. A creature with this trait has a connection to magical electricity.
elemental (trait) Elementals are creatures directly tied to an element and native to the elemental planes. Elementals don't need to breathe.
elf (ancient species) 194
elindrian (trait) These creatures from an industrialized moon resemble formians corrupted by pollution, share a telepathic bond that allows them to communicate nearly instantaneously, and share a primal connection to a massive radioactive ooze known as the Terror of Ukulam.
Eloritu (deity) 200–201, *PC* 36
Elysium (plane) 189
emotion (trait) This effect alters a creature's emotions. Effects with this trait always have the mental trait as well. Creatures with special training or that have mechanical or artificial intelligence are immune to emotion effects.
encounter A mode of play in which time is measured in 6-second rounds and participants use precise actions. Combat takes place in encounters.
bypassed encounters 33
encounter design 75–81
ending the encounter 33
initiative 24–25, *PC* 427
running encounters 24–33, *PC* 427–429
social encounters 30–32, 80, 81
enhanced magic planar phenomenon 185
environment 92–101
environmental (trait) A hazard with this trait is something dangerous that's part of the natural world, such as quicksand or harmful mold. 105–112
environmental damage 92
environment, quick details 39
Eox (world) 166–167
erratic (trait) 182
ethereal (trait) Ethereal creatures are natives of the Ethereal Plane. They can survive the basic environmental effects of the Ethereal Plane.
Ethereal Plane (plane) 188
expanded space rules (variant) 86–87
Experience Points (XP) 56–57, *PC* 7, 29
exploration A mode of play used for traveling, investigating, and other exploring. The GM determines the flow of time.
running exploration 34–43, *PC* 430–432
exploration (trait) An activity with this trait takes more than a turn to use and can usually be used only during exploration mode.

extreme (encounter threat) 75
Eyeswide Agency (faction) 199, *GG* 124
fear (trait) Fear effects evoke the emotion of fear. Effects with this trait always have the mental and emotion traits as well.
fey (trait) Creatures of the First World are called the fey.
fiend (trait) Creatures that hail from or have a strong connection to the unholy planes, fiends can survive the basic environmental effects of planes in the Outer Sphere.
finite (trait) 182
fire (damage type) *PC* 401
fire (trait) Effects with the fire trait deal fire damage or either conjure or manipulate fire. Those that manipulate fire have no effect in an area without fire. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of fire or have a connection to magical fire. 183
First Ones 196–197
First World (plane) 188
flood (natural disaster) 100
flowing (trait) 182
free archetype (variant) 84
Free Captains (faction) 198, *GG* 109–111
fungus (trait) Fungal creatures have the fungus trait. They are distinct from normal fungi.
galactic hero points (variant) 87
Gargantuan (size) This size of creature takes up a space of at least 20 feet by 20 feet (16 squares on the grid) but can be much larger. Gargantuan creatures typically have a reach of 20 feet if they're tall, or 15 feet if they're long, but larger ones could have a much longer reach.
giant (trait) Giants are massive humanoid creatures.
Gideron & Marixah 179, 197
gnome (ancient species) 194
Golarion A planet mysteriously lost during the Gap. 150
gravity 182
  untethered *PC* 441
gravity well (natural disaster) 100
Green Faith 203
hacking (subsystem) A mid-term subsystem providing a narrative challenge to access a secured computer. 222–225
  computers 223–224
halfling (ancient species) 194
haunt (trait) A hazard with this trait is a spiritual echo, often of someone with a tragic death.
hazard 102–115
  building hazards 113–115
  hazards by level 105
Heaven (plane) 190
Hell (plane) 190–191
Hellknights (faction) 198, *GG* 112–114
Hero Point These points last only within a session. You can spend 1 Hero Point to reroll a check, or all your Hero Points to avoid dying. 12, **57**, *PC* 405
high gravity (trait) 182
holy (trait) If a creature with weakness to holy uses a holy item or effect, it takes damage from its weakness.
house rules 17
Huge (size) A Huge creature takes up a 15-foot-by-15-foot space (9 squares on the grid). It typically has a reach of 15 feet if the creature is tall or 10 feet if the creature is long.
human 192, *PC* 50–53
humanoid (trait) Humanoid creatures reason and act much like humans. They typically stand upright and have two arms and two legs.
Hylax (deity) 201, *PC* 36
Ibra (deity) 201, *PC* 36
Idari, the (world) 162–163
Identify Magic DCs 54
illusion (trait) Effects and magic items with this trait involve false sensory stimuli.
immeasurable (trait) 182
impeded magic planar phenomenon 185
incapacitation (trait) An ability with this trait can take a character completely out of the fight or even kill them, and it's harder to use on a more powerful character. If a spell has the incapacitation trait, any creature of more than twice the spell's rank treats the result of their check to prevent being incapacitated by the spell as one degree of success better, or the result of any check the spellcaster made to incapacitate them as one degree of success worse. If any other effect has the incapacitation trait, a creature of higher level than the item, creature, or hazard generating the effect gains the same benefits.
incorporeal (trait) An incorporeal creature or object has no physical form. It can pass through solid objects, including walls. When inside an object, an incorporeal creature can't perceive, attack, or interact with anything outside the object, and if it starts its turn in an object, it is slowed 1 until the end of its turn. A corporeal and an incorporeal creature can pass through one another, but they can't end their movement in each other's space.

An incorporeal creature can't attempt Strength-based checks against physical creatures or objects—only against incorporeal ones—unless those objects have the *ghost touch* property rune. Likewise, a corporeal creature can't attempt Strength-based checks against incorporeal creatures or objects.

Incorporeal creatures usually have immunity to effects or conditions that require a physical body, like disease, poison, and precision damage. They usually have resistance against all damage (except force damage, spirit damage, and damage from Strikes with the *ghost touch* property rune), with double the resistance against non-magical damage.
infiltration (subsystem) A subsystem providing a framework for a party to achieve objectives through subtlety rather than direct confrontation. 218–221
influence (subsystem) A short-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate Influence Points during a social encounter with an NPC to represent their rapport. 209–211
initiative At the start of an encounter, all participants involved roll for initiative to determine the order in which they act. 24–25, *PC* 427
  in social encounters 30–31
Insatiable Eclipse 197

Intimidation DCs 55
Investigate (exploration activity) 42, *PC* 431
investigations 35–36
item An object you carry, hold, or use. Items sometimes grant an item bonus or penalty to certain checks.
automatic bonus progression variant 83
building items 134–137
buying and selling 48–49, 61
jinsul (trait) hierarchical aliens from the Scoured Stars system.
Jinsul Hierocracy (faction) 181, 197
kalo 194, *GG* 152–159
kasatha 192–193, *PC* 54–57
Kazmurg's Absurdity 181
Knights of Golarion (faction) 198–199, *GG* 115–117
kucharn (trait) A ravenous insectile species from the Vast also known as the Swarm.
Lambatuin (deity) 201, *PC* 36
Lao Shu Po (deity) 201, *PC* 36–37
Large (size) A Large creature takes up a 10-foot-by-10-foot space (4 squares on the grid). It typically has a reach of 10 feet if the creature is tall or 5 feet if the creature is long.
lashunta 193, *PC* 58–61
leshy (ancient species) 194
level A number that measures something's overall power. A character has a level from 1st to 20th, and other aspects of the game also have levels.
advancement speeds 57
level 0 characters variant 84–85
leveling up 56–57, *PC* 29
non-combat level 31
story-based leveling 57
level 0 characters (variant) 84–85
Liavara (world) 170–171
light (trait) Light effects overcome non-magical darkness in the area, and can counteract magical darkness. You must usually target darkness magic with your light magic directly to counteract the darkness, but some light spells automatically attempt to counteract darkness.
lines and veils 7
Lissala (deity) 201, *PC* 37
low (encounter threat) 75
low gravity (trait) 182
Maelstrom (plane) 191
magical (trait) Something with the magical trait is imbued with magical energies not tied to a specific tradition of magic. Some items or effects are closely tied to a particular tradition of magic. In these cases, the item has the arcane, divine, occult, or primal trait instead of the magical trait. Any of these traits indicate that the item is magical.
magical (vehicle propulsion trait) 235
magnetic storm (natural disaster) 100
manipulate (trait) You must physically manipulate an item or make gestures to use an action with this trait. Creatures without a suitable appendage can't perform actions with this trait. Manipulate actions often trigger reactions.
maps and miniatures 25, **28**, 31
mechanical (trait) A hazard with this trait is a constructed physical object.
Medium (size) A Medium creature takes up a 5-foot-by-5-foot space (1 square on the grid) and typically has a reach of 5 feet.
mental (damage type) *PC* 401
mental (trait) A mental effect can alter the target's mind. It has no effect on an object or a mindless creature.
metagaming 13
metal (trait) Effects with the metal trait conjure or manipulate metal. Those that manipulate metal have no effect in an area without metal. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of metal or have a connection to magical metal. 183
metamorphic (trait) 183
Meyel (deity) 201, *PC* 37
microgravity (trait) 182
midwife (trait) aberrations with a connection to the Newborn.
mindless (trait) A mindless creature has either programmed or rudimentary mental attributes. Most, if not all, of their mental attribute modifiers are –5. They are immune to all mental effects.
miniatures and maps 25, **28**, 31
minimum proficiency 53
moderate (encounter threat) 75
monitor (trait) Creatures that hail from or have a strong connection to Axis, the Boneyard, or the Maelstrom are called monitors. Monitors can survive the basic environmental effects of planes in the Outer Sphere.
motorized (vehicle propulsion trait) 235
mounted combat 29–30
move (trait) An action with this trait involves moving from one space to another.
narrative collaboration 8, **18–20**
natural disaster 99–101
Near Space 178–179
Netherworld, the (plane) 188
Newborn (deity) 201–202, *PC* 37
Nirvana (plane) 191
non-combat level 31
nonlethal (trait) An effect or weapon with this trait is nonlethal. Damage from a nonlethal effect or weapon knocks a creature out rather than killing it. You can use a nonlethal weapon to make a lethal attack with a –2 circumstance penalty. *PC* 399
nonplayer character (NPC) A character controlled by the GM. 14, 132–133
NPC (nonplayer character) A character controlled by the GM.
building NPCs 132–133
roleplaying NPCs 14
occult (trait) This magic comes from the occult tradition, calling upon bizarre and ephemeral mysteries. Anything with this trait is magical. A creature with this trait is primarily constituted of or has a strong connection to occult magic.
ooze (trait) Oozes are creatures with simple anatomies. They tend to have low mental attribute modifiers and immunity to mental effects and precision damage.

Oras (deity) 202, *PC* 37
orc (ancient species) 194
Outer Rifts (plane) 191
outer space (environment) 96–97
Pact Worlds 148–177
  map 148
pahtra 193, *PC* 62–65
party order 43
Performance DCs 55
Pharasma (deity) 202, *PC* 37
physical (damage type) A grouping of bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. *PC* 401
piercing (damage type) A type of physical damage. *PC* 401
plane A vast or infinite realm that embodies some foundational aspect of reality, existing beyond and in addition to the physical Universe. 182–191
  planar traits 182–183



Plane of Air (plane) 185–186
Plane of Earth (plane) 186
Plane of Fire (plane) 186
Plane of Metal (plane) 186
Plane of Water (plane) 186
Plane of Wood (plane) 187

plant (trait) Vegetable creatures have the plant trait. They are distinct from normal plants. Magical effects with this trait manipulate or conjure plants or plant matter in some way. Effects that manipulate plants have no effect in an area with no plants.

poison (damage type) *PC* 401

polymorph (trait) These effects completely transform the target into a new form. A target can't be under the effect of more than one polymorph at a time. If it comes under the effect of another, the second effect attempts to counteract the first. If it succeeds, it takes effect, and if it fails, the spell has no effect on that target. Any Strikes granted by a polymorph effect are magical. Unless otherwise stated, polymorph spells don't allow the target to take on the appearance of a specific individual creature, but rather just a generic creature of a general type or ancestry.

If you take on a battle form with a polymorph spell, the special statistics can be adjusted only by circumstance bonuses, status bonuses, and penalties. Unless otherwise noted, the battle form prevents you from casting spells, speaking, and using most manipulate actions that require hands. (If there's doubt about whether you can use an action, the GM decides.) Your gear is absorbed into you; the constant abilities of your gear still function, but you can't activate any items. If a polymorph effect causes you to increase in size, you must have space to expand into or the effect is disrupted.

precipitation (climate) 97–98

precision (damage type) A type of damage that increases the attack's listed damage, using the same damage type, rather than adding a separate amount. *PC* 401

preparations 35

primal (trait) This magic comes from the primal tradition, connecting to the natural world and instinct. Anything with this trait is magical. A creature with this trait is primarily constituted of or has a strong connection to primal magic.

proficiency A measure of a character's aptitude at a specific task or quality, with five ranks: untrained, trained, expert, master, and legendary. Proficiency gives a proficiency bonus. Being untrained adds a +0 bonus. Being trained, expert, master, or legendary adds your level plus 2, 4, 6, or 8, respectively.

proficiency without level (variant) 85
  minimum proficiency for checks 53
Prophecies of Kalistrade 203

protean (trait) A family of monitors spawned within the Maelstrom, these creatures are guardians of disorder. They typically have darkvision, an amorphous anatomy, and abilities that create magical warpwaves.

psychopomp (trait) A family of monitors spawned within the Boneyard to convey souls to the Outer Planes. They typically have darkvision, lifesense, and shepherd's touch, and they are immune to death effects.
psystorm (natural disaster) 100
pulled (vehicle propulsion trait) 235
Pulonis (world) 176–177
radiation (trait) Effects with this trait transmit dangerous energy and often cause radiation sickness. 99
radiation sickness 90–91
rain (climate) 98
rare (rarity) 22
rarity How often something is encountered in the game world. The rarities are common, uncommon, rare, and unique. Anything that doesn't list a rarity is common. 22–23
access 23
Recall Knowledge DCs 54–55
reckless (trait) 236–237
religion 144–145, **200–203**
research (subsystem) A short-term subsystem used when the party needs to discover information within a time limit or other restrictions. 212–213
resolving problems 17–18
resting 43, *PC* 432
long-term rest 50
retraining 50–51, *PC* 433–434
rewards 56–61
experience points (XP) 56–57
Hero Points 57
treasure 58–61
routine (hazards) 103
rowed (vehicle propulsion trait) 235
sandbox games 60, **71**
sandstorm (natural disaster) 100
sarcesian 194–195, *GG* 160–167
Search (exploration activity) 42, *PC* 432
secret (trait) The GM rolls the check for this ability in secret. *PC* 397
Sense Direction DCs 55
sentient (trait) 183
session A Starfinder game session usually lasts a few hours. 9–11
off-session gaming 11
planning a session 9
running a session 10–11
session zero 9
setting
building your own setting 138–147
Pact Worlds setting 148–181
severe (encounter threat) 75
shade (trait) Shades are mortal souls who have been judged and then transformed into creatures native to other planes. Petitioners can survive the basic environmental effects of their home plane.
shadow (trait) 183
shirren 193, *PC* 66–69
simple DCs 52–53
Singularitism 203
skill paragon (variant) 87
skittermander 195, *PC* 70–73
Skyfire Legion (faction) 199, *GG* 125
slashing (damage type) A type of physical damage. *PC* 401
sleep (trait) This effect can cause a creature to fall asleep or get drowsy.
Small (size) A Small creature takes up a 5-foot-by-5-foot space (1 square on the grid) and typically has a reach of 5 feet.
snow (climate) 98, 100
social encounters 30–31, 80, 81
social skill DCs 55
Song of Silence 203
sonic (damage type) *PC* 401
sonic (trait) An effect with the sonic trait functions only if it makes sound, meaning it has no effect in an area of silence or in a vacuum. This is different from an auditory spell, which is effective only if the target can hear it. A sonic effect might deal sonic damage. A creature with this trait has a connection to magical sound.
special battles mounted, aerial, and aquatic combat 29–31, *PC* 429
spectra (trait) Servitors of Triune usually found in the Drift.
spirit (damage type) Directly affecting the spiritual essence of a creature, spirit damage can damage a target projecting its consciousness or possessing another creature even if the target's body is elsewhere. The possessed creature isn't harmed by the blast. Spirit damage doesn't harm creatures that have no spirit, such as constructs. *PC* 401
spirit (trait) Effects with this trait can affect creatures with spiritual essence and might deal spirit damage. A creature with this trait is defined by its spiritual essence. Spirit creatures often lack a material form.
SRO 195
Starfinder Society running games for the organized play program 8
Starfinder Society (faction) 199, *GG* 118–120
organized play 8–9
starvation and thirst 43
static (trait) 183
strange gravity (trait) 182
subjective gravity (trait) 182
Subsist DCs 55
subsystems 205–239
surprise attacks 38, 43
Swarm 197
swarm (trait) A swarm is a mass or cloud of creatures that functions as one monster. Its size entry gives the size of the entire mass, though for most swarms the individual creatures that make up that mass are Tiny. A swarm can occupy the same space as other creatures, and must do so in order to use its damaging action. A swarm typically has weakness to effects that deal damage over an area (like area spells and splash weapons). Swarms are immune to the grappled, prone, and restrained conditions.
Szandite Collective (faction) 179

Talavet (deity) 202, *PC* 38
tech (trait) Equipment with the tech trait relies on electricity and may gain the glitching condition. Some creatures and hazards also have the tech trait, such as artificial intelligence, robots, and turrets.
teleportation (trait) Teleportation effects allow you to instantaneously move from one point in space to another. Teleportation doesn't usually trigger reactions based on movement.
temperature (climate) 98
thirst and starvation 43
time 151
time (trait) Time creatures are natives of the Dimension of Time. They do not age, and while some may be driven by supernatural hungers, they do not need to eat or drink to survive. They can survive the basic environmental effects of the Dimension of Time.
timeless (trait) 183
timeshifted adventures 242–245
Tiny (size) A creature of this size takes up less than a 5-foot-by-5-foot space (1 square on the grid), and multiple Tiny creatures can occupy the same square on the grid. At least four Tiny creatures can occupy the same square, and even more can occupy the same square at the GM's discretion. They can also occupy the same space as larger creatures, and if their reach is 0 feet, they must do so in order to attack.
tornado (natural disaster) 100
total party kill (TPK) 33
TPK (total party kill) 33
Track DCs 55
Train an Animal DCs 55
trap (trait) A hazard or item with this trait is constructed to hinder interlopers. 104–112
travel 36–37
treasure
awarding treasure 58–61
for new characters 61
treasure by encounter 81
Triaxus (world) 168–169
Triune (deity) 202, *PC* 38
trivial (encounter threat) 75
tsunami (natural disaster) 100
unbounded (trait) 182
uncommon (rarity) 22
undead (trait) Once living, these creatures were infused after death with void energy and soul-corrupting unholy magic. When reduced to 0 Hit Points, an undead creature is destroyed. Undead creatures are damaged by vitality energy and are healed by void energy, and don't benefit from healing vitality effects.
underwater combat 30
unholy (trait) A creature, item, spell, or effect with this trait is sanctified to victimizing, causing harm, and battling celestial powers.
unique (rarity)
Universe, the (plane) 184
Urgathoa (deity) 202, *PC* 38
variant rules 82–87
Vast, the 180–181
vehicles (subsystem) Vehicles are various means of transportation, often with specific purposes, that come into play during encounters and exploration. 234–239
vehicular combat 29–30
Verces (world) 160–161
verthani 195
vesk 195, *PC* 74–77
Veskarium (faction) 178–179
Victory Points (VP) (subsystem) A flexible point-based subsystem for tracking progress toward a goal. 206–208
virulent (trait) Afflictions with the virulent trait are harder to remove. You must succeed at two consecutive saves to reduce a virulent affliction's stage by 1. A critical success reduces a virulent affliction's stage by only 1 instead of by 2.
visual (trait) A visual effect can affect only creatures that can see it. This applies only to visible parts of the effect, as determined by the GM.
vitality (damage type) Energy damage drawn from Creation's Forge, which damages only creatures with void healing (such as undead). *PC* 401
vitality (trait) 183
vlaka 195, *GG* 168–175
void (damage type) Energy damage drawn from the Void, which damages only living creatures. *PC* 401
Void, the (plane) 185
void (trait) 183
volcanic eruption (natural disaster) 100–101
vortex (natural disaster) 101
watches 43
water (trait) Effects with the water trait either manipulate or conjure water. Those that manipulate water have no effect in an area without water. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of water or have a connection to magical water. 183
wealth character wealth 61
weather 97–98
welcoming environment 6–8, 45
Weydan (deity) 202, *PC* 38
wildfire (natural disaster) 101
wind (climate) 98
wind (vehicle propulsion trait) 235
wood (trait) Effects with the wood trait conjure or manipulate wood. Those that manipulate wood have no effect in an area without wood. Creatures with this trait consist primarily of wood or have a connection to magical wood. 183
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