

Main engines:

STL drives are primarily used to move around a star system. A ship may leave FTL travel on the edge of a system, scan it's destination, and then use STL drives to propel it inwards towards the destination. The overwhelming type of STL drive is the fusion drive. It uses a direct channel, protected by magnetic fields, to route a portion of the fusion reaction from the generator directly to the engines.

Ships have "maximum" safe speeds below FTL. This represents how good their forward shielding is. The faster you go, the smaller of a thing you need to hit to wreck your ship. Keep in mind the force = mass times acceleration equation. A second factor that determines the "maximum" safe speed is the presence of inertial dampeners. Without these a ship cannot accelerate faster than the crew can support. If the ship has no crew, it's maximum speed will come down to its structural integrity and how tolerant its components are of higher acceleration rates.

There is no friction in space, thus a ship can accelerate for shorter periods of time and then simply coast, maintaining it's current speed. Also note, that a ship can never achieve FTL flight by using STL engines. Course corrections are "loud" in terms of maintaining stealth as they show up as a large thermal bloom on opponent's scanners.

An offshoot of FTL technology, there are some reports of so called "reaction-less" drives that somehow claw the ship across space-time without requiring an external drive. These systems are clearly cutting edge technology and tightly controlled.

Thrusters:

Thrusters are universally installed on ships so that they have fine grained movement capability. Except in the case of the largest ships, these are simple expulsions of gas. Ships designed to be stealthy will use a "cold gas" thruster to hide the thermal energy of normal thrusters. While these thrusters can move a ship, they cannot be used to leave a orbital bodies' surface unless the gravity produced by the mass of that object is very small (i.e. a smaller asteroid). Thrusters additionally have a effective "fuel tank" of pressurized gas on-board the ship. Long enough thruster firings can empty this tank, requiring the ship to create and pressurize more gas.

Anti-Grav Systems:

These specialized propulsion methods are designed to permit a ship on the surface of an orbital body to reach a safe altitude prior to engaging it's main fusion drive. The purpose of this is two fold. First, an unsafe fusion

engine ignition on the surface or just above the surface of an inhabited planet is catastrophic to the local area. In the vacuum of space, this is usually not a problem, though space stations will prohibit the use of fusion drives within a locally defined exclusion radius of the station so that it does not receive any damage from its ignition. Second, the ship's gas thrusters are not capable of producing enough thrust to permit a ship to break the planet's gravity. Anti-grav systems fill the niche needed by allowing a ship to reach a safe altitude of approximately 5km so that it can use its primary STL drive. The 5km figure is modified proportionally by the gravity of the orbital body.