

Ship to Ship Combat

Combat in space is hours, days, or even weeks of boredom followed by seconds of sheer terror. Velocity keeps you safe, but velocity can kill you. Is that an anomaly or a sensor contact about to fire on you? Ship to ship space combat is a chess match, played with an unforgiving clock. To the victor go the spoils, and the loser is rendered unto the void.

Targeting: You can't shoot at what you can't spot

First, as a primer, review the [Ship Sensors](#) handout. This covers the ship systems that can be used to detect aggressors or just targets. With that under our belts, understand that active RADAR/LIDAR systems give away their positions as fast as light can travel. It is far easier to spot a RADAR/LIDAR transmitter than for a RADAR/LIDAR receiver to generate a solid return off of another ship. EMCON, or emissions control, helps mitigate this when there is enough distance between targets. When you are "loud" in the void, everyone in the system can tell when given enough time.

Passive detection is possible, even if the target isn't radiating anything. The occlusion of background stars can still give away a ship, though the smaller it is, the less likely that is to be detected. Everything in space has an albedo, a value for how much light reflects off of it. The lower that is, the less likely a camera or telescope is to be able to detect a ship via passive sensors.

Skills: Depending on the situation this is either a Perception check, or a Computers check.

Distances: From Meters to Light Seconds

As in personal combat, ship to ship combat in Genesys uses the 5 range bands (engaged, short, medium, long, extreme). While these are easily defined in personal combat, they are much more fluid in space combat. Exact ranges in kilometers aren't what we're looking at here, instead the GM is attempting to determine how far apart two ships are from each other relative to their direction and velocity.

Gunnery: You've found your target, now what?

Here we come to the section on ranged combat in space. Whether the goal is to disable your target so you can board it or to just obliterate it entirely, this section is for you. Gunnery is the skill made for each and every attack made by a ship based weapon.

The three main types of weapons are: mass drivers, energy weapons, and missiles.

Mass drivers: While a single shot from one ship towards another is unlikely to hit, multiple repeating shots stand a better chance. Additionally, it is possible to bracket a ship's course into an area so that other weapons are more likely to hit.

Energy weapons: These come in two main flavors: lasers and plasma. Lasers do what they say on the tin. Give the extreme distances in space, it is possible to hit a target more than 1 light second away, but this typically only is possible when the firing ship has multiple linked lasers all firing at the same time. Plasma weapons are the opposite. Magnetically protected packets of generated plasma, these weapons work only at short distances.

Missiles: These are self guided missiles, with a variety of payloads. Some missiles carry penetrator warheads designed to puncture the enemy ship. Other missiles carry nuclear warheads to disrupt the target and burn off crucial sensors. Finally, there are electronic countermeasure missiles, sacrificing their short lives to confuse the target, so that their fellow missiles can strike true.

Boarding Actions: Why fire missiles when you can throw hands.

If your goal is to completely eradicate a target, just keep firing, they'll explode sooner or later. If you aim is to instead capture the target, you're in the right spot. Boarding actions are common in the Salt Road universe. Ships are expensive, and sometimes a payday is better if you capture it and sell it or chop it up for parts.

First, a boarding target needs to either agree to be boarded (Talk to them, maybe they'll surrender) or have it's primary fusion engines disabled along with some number of maneuvering thrusters. It absolutely helps to strip off their weapons, so they can't continue to plink at you as you close to engaged range. The easiest and most surefire way to stop an enemy ship from escaping is to target their drive cone. As no one has figured out how to stick their claws into the raw fabric of space and drag their ship through it (or have they?), the drive cone is what channels the raw power of the fusion engines in a direction that imparts movement to the ship. Put a few holes in it, and one of two things will happen: either it will begin to burn up under the flames of it's own fire, or the ship will be unable to make significant course changes.

Once the ship has lost it's main engines, feel free to take out the maneuvering thrusters and voila, you have a sitting duck. While the ship hasn't stopped moving, because inertia is still a thing, it will now be on a predictable course. A simple docking check will then be required to hard dock with your target and you can roll on through and see what candy they have inside.

Damage Control: Plug that hull breach with a nearby Hancher

A ship that takes HT or SS can be repaired, but only one HT repair attempt per combat is possible. That said, SS is a very important resource. This is represented in the Salt Road universe as heat. While a ship that is equipped with hardfields won't take any physical damage, once the SS threshold is met, the hardfield generator must be shut down, or ejected (and thus returning SS in the process). Pilots also can choose to spend SS to perform maneuvers, along with a variety of other characters for a variety of other reasons. See the [Vehicle Actions and Maneuvers](#) sheet for more information. Characters onboard a ship may use the damage control action to reduce the current SS on a ship. This is sometimes as simple as plugging up a breach with foam, resetting a breaker, or putting out an electrical fire.

The void of space is a cold and unforgiving place. Explosive decompression is never a good thing, which is why serious combatants go into combat with their internal compartments drained of atmosphere. Military ships "drain the can" frequently to preserve resources (breathable air, water), avoid explosive decompression sourced damage to crew, and to give overboard crew every chance to survive. Just know that if you go outside without a hat on, that you should breath out so you don't wreck your lungs.

Running Away: Discretion is the better part of valor and often cheaper

Ok, thanks Mr. GM for all that information about equipment I don't have, what do I do if I don't want them to put a missile in my galley? To those who would seek to avoid combat, it's simple: stay undetected. Well, GM, they've found me, now what? At this point, a hard burn may be your only option, but this only works if you can tolerate more acceleration than they can. What's that you say? They have fancy inertial compensators? Well, then your choice is simple: put something solid between them and you. Make it an asteroid, another ship, a station, or a moon. Anything that prevents them from reaching you with a line-of-sight weapon is significantly advantageous. Missiles can be fired "around corners", but missiles can be disabled or destroyed by the target's mass drivers or energy weapons. It's not easy, but even an anti-collision laser can take out a missile.