



SWORD OF THE STARS



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MANUAL



SWORD OF THE STARS

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Early in the 22nd century, humanity escaped from Einstein's cage. The giant, ring-shaped engines of the Node drive gave us the power to leap to the nearest star at many times the speed of light. After centuries of dreaming, we were finally free to leave the cradle of our home world.

It took us years to build the Earth's first Colony ship. The Nova Maria was a symbol for all mankind. Soon it was loaded with humanity's best and brightest. They prepared to depart, ready to inherit a galaxy which we had long ago decided was devoid of intelligent life.

The universe was all out there for our taking...

Someone should have told that to the Hivers.

They came in silence. No statement of intention. No declaration of war. Without even a demand for our surrender.

They hit us without warning; within seconds, our dreams of peaceful expansion were so many burning meteors falling to earth.

We barely survived the first Hiver incursion. Years later we would find that we had faced only a small nesting fleet -- we had yet to see the full power of the Swarm.

But the Hive was not the only threat.

When we ventured forth, we soon encountered the ruthless legions of the Tarka... and eventually, the phantom fleets of the enigmatic Liir.

And so we learned how to build bigger, stronger ships. More powerful weapons. Humanity had to explore, expand and even conquer, just to hold our own in a universe where weakness was extinction. In order to survive, we learned to wield...

The Sword of the Stars.

INSTALLATION

Insert the Sword of the Stars CD-ROM into your computer's disc drive. The Sword of the Stars installation will automatically begin -- follow the on-screen instructions. You will be alerted once the installation of the game is complete. You can then run Sword of the Stars from the Start Menu or desktop shortcut.

SotS requires DirectX® 9 and a DirectX® 9 capable video card with up-to-date drivers installed. The latest DirectX® release - Installer can be found at:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/directx>.

Minimum System Requirements For Sword of the Stars:

- Microsoft Windows 2000/XP
- 1 GHz Pentium®/compatible CPU
- 512 MB RAM system memory
- 128 MB DirectX8 class video card
- 4x CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive
- 56-Kbps modem

Recommended System Requirements For Sword of The Stars:

- Microsoft Windows 2000/XP
- 1.5 GHz Pentium®/compatible CPU
- 1 GB RAM system memory
- 128 MB RAM DirectX9 class video card
- 4x CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive
- Broadband Connection

Additionally, the computer will require a quad-speed CD ROM drive, approximately 1GB of free hard drive space, and a Windows® compatible mouse as well as a keyboard.

CD-KEY

To run the game you must have a valid CD-Key. Your unique CD-Key is printed on the back of this manual.

After you start the game for the first time you'll be prompted to enter the CD-Key. The CD-Key consists of four sets of four characters - every set has to be entered into the corresponding entry box. To enter your CD-Key, click on each entry box, and then type the CD-Key, as it appears on your manual.

Keep your CD-Key safe and private, in case you need to re-install the game at a later point. Without a valid CD-Key you will not be able to play Sword of the Stars.



THE FOUR RACES

Sword of the Stars allows players to control one of four highly distinct races. Each has advantages and disadvantages in their research of technology, colonization of planets, and most importantly, the method by which they travel between the stars. All aspects of the various species are detailed within, but here is a basic introduction to each race.



Human

Humans are an air-breathing, land-based species of sentient mammals, evolved from a primate line which can be traced to a tiny tree-dwelling shrew. They are highly adaptable and thrive in a wide variety of environments, but seem most comfortable within a limited range of temperature, gravity and atmospheric density, which mimic the conditions on their home world.

Drive Technology: Node Drive – the Node Drive allows Human ships to jump along certain unchanging Node lines between planets. Not every planet has a node line to every other planet however, so Humans view their movement through the galaxy much like travel along the rail lines of Old Earth. While these lines do create limitations in Human movement, traveling the Node Lines is very fast, and in an emergency, Humans can undertake slower-than-light jumps between systems that don't have Node Line connections.

Notes: The Human race has only just taken to the stars and their talent for broad innovation across all technologies went with them. While they have no strong advantages in their ship designs or technologies, they also have not strong disadvantages either.



Hiver

Human spacers call this species "Hivers" (or even more informally, "Bugs") because of their resemblance to the countless insect species found on Earth. Size notwithstanding, Hivers do have many features in common with terrestrial insects, especially when it comes to social organization and physical appearance. Nonetheless, they are a fully sentient space-faring race.

Drive Technology: Teleport Gates – by their nature, Hivers are deliberate and methodical in their approach to most everything, but quick to react to threats. It's not surprising then that they never developed a FTL drive technology, preferring to move slowly between star systems, but once they arrive, they use Gate Ships to deploy powerful Teleport Gates, which allow them to instantly move ships from gate to gate. As their web of gates increases in size, so increases the number of ships they can move in a single turn – it is not, however, an unlimited number, so careful choices must be made. Also, once deployed, Gateships cannot be moved and must be carefully guarded.

Notes: Besides their powerful ability to instantly reinforce any gateship location, Hivers also have a very fast population growth speed, which means more planetary output, faster. As well, their ships, although slower than the other races, are designed to take the most damage.



Tarkas

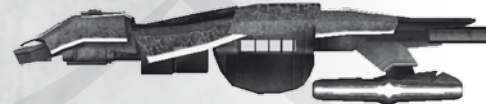
The Tarkas are a reptilian species, sharing many outward physical characteristics with terrestrial lizards. Although their internal structures and highly evolved brains are very different from anything seen in the reptile species of Earth, their appearance has nonetheless earned them a variety of derogatory nicknames among human spacers, who commonly refer to them as "Lizards" or "Crocs".

Not much is known about the origins of the Tarka, but scientists have speculated that their species must have evolved in a dense arboreal environment, because they have retained many features we still associate with tree-dwelling species. They can live in a variety of gravities and temperature zones, but they seem to prefer warmer worlds for their large colonies.

Their culture is very ancient and has been remarkably stable in the long term, allowing for hundreds of thousands of years of recorded history and over five hundred years as a space-faring race.

Drive Technology: Warp Drives – The Tarkas have developed the very reliable Warp Drive, which allows them to travel star to star at very good speeds. The Tarks, and to a lesser degree The Liir, are the best races for new players to start with, as their Drive technologies are the ones most people are familiar with.

Notes: The Tarkas not only have a talent for war, but a taste for it. As such, their ships are designed for aggressive, head-on attacks and the construction of Cruiser class ships is cheaper than it is for other races.



The Liir

The Liir are an air-breathing aquatic species, and bear a strong resemblance to the extinct cetaceans of Old Earth. They are the result of a long-term process of environmental change: an ice age lasting millions of years initially allowed for the development of mammalian species on the isolated tropical islands and huge ice shields of their home world, but eventually an extended warming period resulted in a planet with less than 10% of its surface above water. The vast majority of land-dwelling species returned to the sea -- including the early ancestors of the Liir.

The Liir have not been a star-faring species for long. Up until 150 years ago, the Liir were a peaceful race with limited technology. Various agrarian and nomadic cultures operated within the rich waters of their home world, and war was virtually unknown to them. Although they had not developed far in the sciences of architecture or ballistics, some Liir societies were extremely advanced in bio-engineering, aquatic horticulture, volcanic engineering and metallurgy.

The Liir were conquered and enslaved by another star-faring race, whom they learned to call the Suul-ka. The Suul-ka established several lucrative industries on Muur, the Liirian home-world, and force-marched the Liirians through the Industrial Revolution by employing them as slaves in mines, factories and manufacturing facilities.

After several decades of abuse, realizing that the greed and rapacity of the Suul-ka would destroy the aquatic environment of their home world completely, the Liir rebelled against their alien masters. The war was remarkably bloody in its early stages, but finally ended when the Liir unleashed a bio-weapon tailored to Suul-ka physiology on Muur. It is impossible at this point to say what agent the Liir may have used, or what vectors it followed. We only know that the resulting disease was so virulent and lethal that it appears to have quickly spread beyond the colony and completely eradicated the Suul-ka, at least from that sector of space.

The current state of Liirian technology is a result of their successful rebellion. The former slaves of the Suul-ka quickly absorbed the abandoned technology of their masters, and have adapted the old drives, guns and orbital elevators to their own use. Driven by natural curiosity and the desire to preempt any further assaults from the stars, the Liir have now begun exploring space.

Drive Technology: Stutter Warp – Never looking to take to the stars, a discovery in simple teleportation was later applied to starships when the need for interstellar travel was required. Unlike the Hivers, who developed a means of teleporting ships over vast distances, The Liir learned to teleport mass very short, almost imperceptible distances incredibly fast. The result is movement without the limitations of inertia. Practically, Liir transit is similar to Tark transit in that both are good, average speeds with full freedom of destination, but unlike the Tarks, once in combat, The Liir continue to use their drives in-system. Their proximity to a gravity well does limit their speed a great deal, but their movement is still very fast and fluid compared to the other races.

Notes: Originally a peaceful race, The Liir focused on sciences that would improve their world. Once they were forced to take up arms and go into space, their inexperience showed in their weaker ship designs. However they also brought with them their impressive ability to research technologies, particularly the Biotechnologies.



SWORD OF THE STARS IN BRIEF

Sword of the Stars is a hybrid game, combining elements familiar to anyone who has played either turn-based and real-time strategy games. Here is a brief overview of how the game plays. Greater detail on all areas of the game will follow later in this manual, but it will be helpful to have the structure of gameplay in mind before proceeding any further.

By design, Sword of the Stars is intended to be as simple and intuitive as possible for a 4X (explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate) title. Once you learn a few basic controls, players should feel free to jump right into the game.

Gameflow

Strategy – empire management

In Sword of the Stars most everything takes place during the Strategy Turn – all aspects of your empire in - those parts of the galaxy you control - can be controlled here, from building and moving ships, designing new ships, researching technologies, to colonizing and maintaining your planets. When you've done everything you'd like to do for the turn, you click to end the turn. Once all opponents have ended their turn, their orders are carried out and the movement of their ships compared. If no ships and planets encounter one another, then the turn is over and a new strategy round begins. However, if opponents do encounter one another, then the game moves into real-time combat.

Combat – real-time conflict resolution

If two or more opponents encounter one another, then they are informed of the encounter. It is possible that some players may have more than one encounter in different parts of the galaxy. In these cases, a player can allow the game AI to fight one or more battles on his behalf, if the encounter is minor, while he concentrates on more crucial engagements. Otherwise, all players are taken into their combat rounds to fight their opponents. If a player has to wait for combat to start (for example, their opponent is in the middle of another fight), they remain on the Strategy screen. All parts of the screen and its sub-screens can be viewed, though most controls are locked out – these things can't be altered until the new turn starts! However, players can think about their next move and even work on and save new ship designs, which can save time next turn.

Once all combat has been resolved, all players return to the Strategy screen and a new round begins, repeating the process over again.

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

The researching of new technologies in Sword of the Stars is unique in a number of ways – not only is the tech tree quite large, but the tree is dynamic; it will be different for each player in each new game. Key technologies will always be available – players will always be able to research up to the Dreadnought class of ship. However, certain offensive, defensive, and infrastructure technologies may not become available in any particular game. Or at best, they will become available, not by researching straight to them, but by researching related technologies in other areas.

CUSTOM SHIP DESIGNS

In Sword of the Stars, players can design their own ships. As there are over 290 ship sections over four races, the potential number of designs is quite high. Each game starts with certain basic ship sections and a few basic designs, but in very short order players will begin altering those designs and creating brand new ones as research opens up new ship sections.

Size Classes

Ships in the game come in three size classes; Destroyers, Cruisers, and Dreadnoughts. Players start in the Destroyer “era” of ships, and technology will allow them to move into the Cruiser and Dreadnought eras later in the game.

Each ship, of any size class, has three sections: Command, Mission, and Engine. The order of these sections in any design is always Command, Mission, and Engine, but beyond that, players can mix and match as they please, swapping Deep Scan Command modules in and taking AI Command sections out, or replacing Fission engines with better Fusion engines.

Defense Platforms

There is only one exception to the three-section design, and that is for Defense Platforms. Defense Platforms are a single section and are deployed into orbits around your colony worlds. There is a Defense Platform for each size class, and can be accessed in the design screen from the list of available Mission Sections.



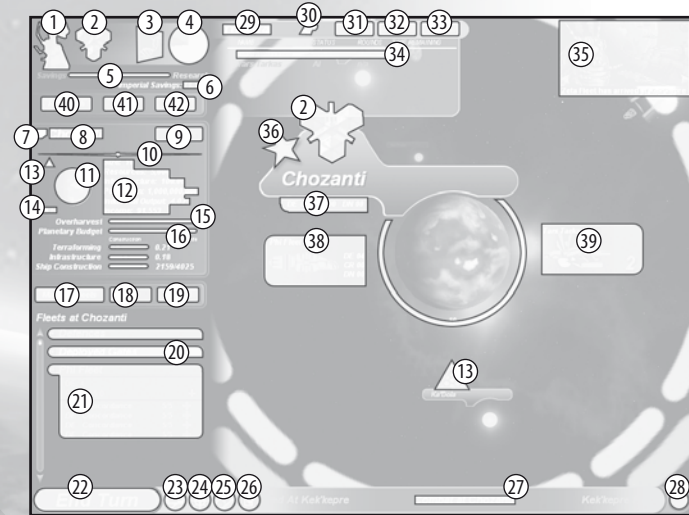
Weapons, Turrets and Banks

Besides the mix-and-match ship sections, players can add certain technologies, such as Reflective Armor, and pick weapons to outfit their ships. Each section has a variety of weapon turrets of four different sizes: Heavy, Medium, Light, and Point Defense. These turrets are arranged into groups called banks. The weapons in these banks are determined by the player's preference and are limited only by size – heavy weapons cannot be mounted into a bank of light turrets, but light weapons can be mounted into heavy turrets.

There are some special exceptions. Mines for example can only be deployed by a Minelayer section, and the Spinal Mount mission section allows for one Beam weapon to be mounted, which takes up the entire section. Otherwise, players can load out their ships, as they like.



STRATEGY MAP OVERVIEW



- 1) Player avatar
- 2) Player badge
- 3) Current research
- 4) Budget Microview
- 5) Savings/Research Slider
- 6) Savings
- 7) Notepad
- 8) Plant name
- 9) Abandon planet button
- 10) Climate hazard
- 11) Planet view
- 12) Planet stats
- 13) Gate symbol
- 14) Satellites (how many of each size class)
- 15) Overharvest slider
- 16) Planetary Budget Slider
- 17) Manage Fleets
- 18) Move
- 19) Special
- 20) Collapsed fleet list
- 21) Expanded fleet list
- 22) End Turn
- 23) Chat button
- 24) Toggle Star Brightness
- 25) Toggle Fleet lines
- 26) Objectives
- 27) New Ticker
- 28) Options/Set AI Policy/Save/Quit button
- 29) Turn number
- 30) Gate network capacity (Hiver only)
- 31) Trade button
- 32) Ally button
- 33) Rankings
- 34) Player list and info
- 35) Event information
- 36) Home-world marker
- 37) Ship class overview
- 38) Friendly Fleets overview
- 39) Enemy Fleets overview
- 40) Research button
- 41) Design button
- 42) Build button

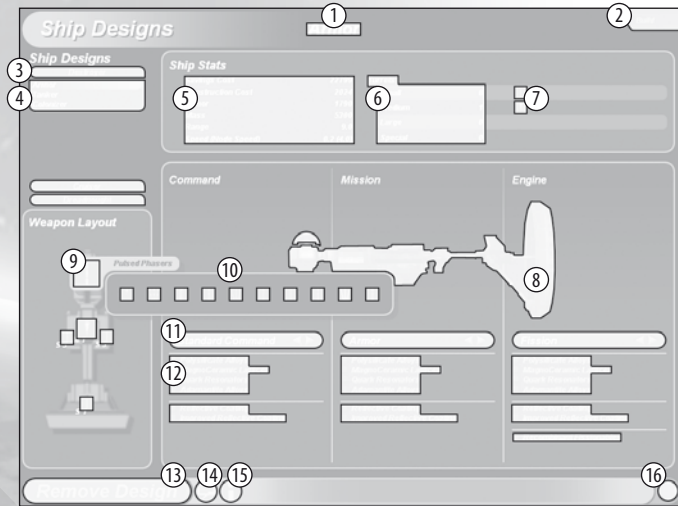
TACTICAL COMBAT OVERVIEW



- 1) Planet population
- 2) Planet name
- 3) Fleet Retreat order button
- 4) Fleet Break off to back line order button
- 5) Fleet Normal order button
- 6) Fleet Stand off order button
- 7) Fleet Close to attack order button
- 8) Fleet Hold Fire
- 9) Next reinforcement
- 10) Reinforcements List
- 11) Expand / Collapse Reinforcements List
- 12) Selected ships (green) Targeted ships (red)
- 13) Ship Movement marker
- 14) Sensors button
- 15) Sensors information

- 16) Weapons groups
- 17) Weapons groups hold fire
- 18) Select All Weapons Groups
- 19) Weapons bank Icons
- 20) Start / Stop Cloaking
- 21) Ship Retreat order button
- 22) Ship Break off to back line order button
- 23) Ship Normal order button
- 24) Ship Stand off order button
- 25) Ship Close to attack order button
- 26) Ship Type list
- 27) Expand / Collapse Ship Type list
- 28) Options button

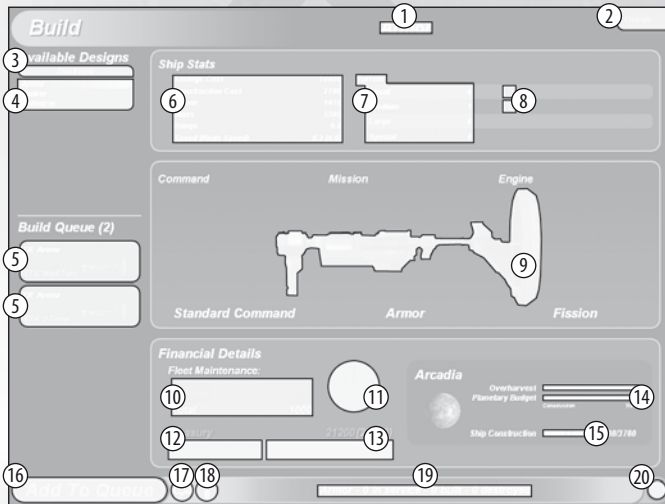
DESIGN SCREEN OVERVIEW



- 1) Design name
- 2) Switch to Build screen
- 3) Ship size class tabs
- 4) Designs list
- 5) Ship stats
- 6) Weapons overview
- 7) Weapons icons
- 8) Ship design view
- 9) Weapons bank icons
- 10) Available weapons for bank
- 11) Visible section name
- 12) Optional section technologies
- 13) Delete/Save selected design
- 14) Chat button
- 15) Section information overlay
- 16) Exit Design Screen

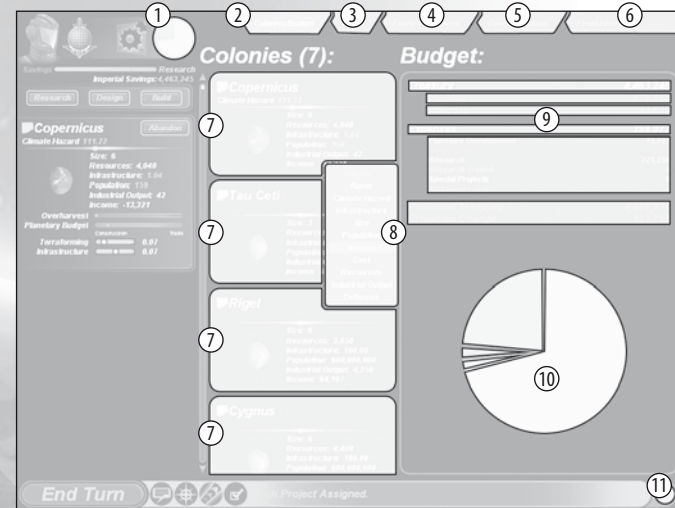


BUILD SCREEN OVERVIEW



- 1) Design name
- 2) Switch to Design screen
- 3) Ship size class tab
- 4) Designs list
- 5) Ships in build queue
- 6) Ship stats
- 7) Weapons overview
- 8) Weapons icons
- 9) Ship design view
- 10) Current Fleet Maintenance costs
- 11) Budget micro-view (not clickable)
- 12) Available money
- 13) Build costs spent
- 14) Planet of build overview
- 15) Savings/Research Slider
- 16) Add selected design to queue
- 17) Chat button
- 18) Section information overlay
- 19) Empire-wise usage of selected design
- 20) Exit Build Screen

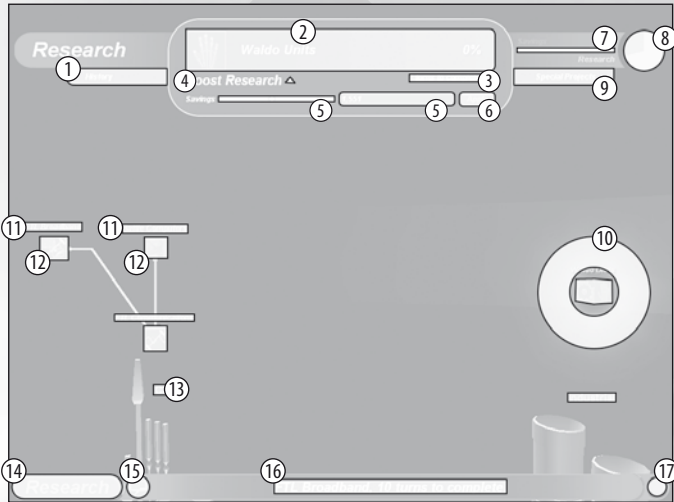
BUDGET SCREEN OVERVIEW



- 1) Budget micro-view
- 2) Colonies and Budget overview
- 3) Fleets list
- 4) Explored systems list
- 5) Enemy colonies list
- 6) Event history
- 7) Colony planet information
- 8) Sort By list
- 9) Empire Budget details
- 10) Empire Budget chart
- 11) Exit Budget screens



RESEARCH SCREEN OVERVIEW



- 1) Research history
- 2) Current research project and percent complete.
- 3) Turns to completion
- 4) Research boost
- 5) Research boost investment slider
- 6) Apply research boost
- 7) Savings/Research Slider
- 8) Budget microview
- 9) Special Research projects
- 10) Selected research
- 11) Technology name
- 12) Technology icon
- 13) Technology area
- 14) Begin/Cancel selected research
- 15) Chat button
- 16) Selected technology completion time
- 17) Exit Research Screen



THE STRATEGY TURN – CONTROLLING YOUR EMPIRE

3D Star Map

The most notable feature on the Strategy screen is the Galaxy Map, which is a fully 3D map of stars. Moving around this map is the key to Sword of the Stars – almost all other information on the screen reflects what you're looking at on the map, so once you know how to control the map, controlling the rest of the game is a snap.

Selection – You can left click on any planet, star, or deep-space fleet on the map, which will bring up all information pertaining to that position, both on the side-bar and around the planet selection icon.

Camera lock – Double left clicking on a planet or star will lock the camera to that position.

Map Rotate – By clicking and holding the right mouse button, then moving the mouse around, the map will rotate; left, right, up, and down.

Zoom – The mouse wheel will zoom the map camera in and out on the object to which the camera is locked. As you zoom in and out, you will notice there are certain levels of detail to the icons associated with stars, planets, and fleets. A lot of this information is duplicated to the left on the side bar, but it can be handy to see it on the map. As well, certain special ship functions can be accessed from the star map. More on that later.

The Home Key : Quick focus on your home system.

STRATEGY SIDE BAR

Everything else about a player's empire is presented in the left side bar of the Strategy screen. From top to bottom, the side bar offers the following:

Player Avatar – Each player chooses an avatar to represent himself/herself in the game. Each race has several to choose from when setting up a profile. More on player profiles later.

Current Research – When you are researching a technology, the icon for that technology will be displayed here for easy reference and access to the research screen.

Player Badge – Like the Player Avatar, this badge represents the player in-game. This badge, along with player color, will distinguish one player's ships and planets from another.

Imperial Economy

Budget Microview – This pie chart represents how the empire's budget is being utilized at any given time. Clicking on this chart will take players to their Empire Overview, which has detailed information about the budget. As players become more familiar with the game, the quick look at the chart will be very useful. The colors represent the following aspects of your budget;

- Green** – The portion of income going into savings this turn.
- Light Blue** – Planetary development, meaning money spent on terraforming and building infrastructure on colony worlds.
- Blue** – Fleet Maintenance. The cost, per round, required to keep your fleets flying.
- Gold** – Money spent on research.
- Brown** – Money invested to help an ally with their research.

More information on the Budget Overview screen later

Savings/Research Slider – Any money not earmarked for use elsewhere (fleet upkeep, planetary development, etc.) can either be saved for later use or pumped into research. This split can be set using this slider.

Imperial Savings – This denotes the amount of money your empire has managed to save up to this point.

Research / Design / Build – These three buttons, like the Budget Microview button, access separate sub-screens. They all require a more detailed look later in this manual, but for now just remember that they can be accessed through these buttons.

Planetary Economy

Planetary Information – When a planet or star is selected, important details about that system appear here. If the selected star is unexplored, the information will be limited to name, but when a planet owned by a player is selected, there is a great deal of information, including:

Planet Name – all planets have a name. Some are general names, but some are specific to one of the four races in the game. When a player encounters these alien names, they are moving closer to another player's empire.

Planet Size – All planets range in size from 1 – 10. Planets of every size can be colonized, provided the climate isn't too hazardous, but size will limit a planet's population, output, and ability to maintain orbital defenses.

Resources – This is the amount of renewable materials available to produce ships. The more resources a planet has, in conjunction with Infrastructure and population, the greater its industrial output. Overharvesting will decrease this value, but having mining ships drop off ore from other planets will increase resources.

Infrastructure – This is the level of industrialization on a planet, and helps determine the planet's potential industrial output. The number is a percentage, so when it reads 100, the planet has a fully developed infrastructure.

Population – Population is limited to the size of the planet. A size 10 planet can have a maximum population of one billion people. The size of population also affects a planet's industrial output.

Industrial Output – Based on population, resources, and infrastructure, this value dictates how fast a planet can produce ships.

Planet View – To the left is a picture of the planet selected. How habitable a planet is, as well as how big it is compared to other planets, can easily be seen here. The more perfect the planet is for a player's race, the better it will appear. On the other end of the spectrum, a planet that is completely uninhabitable will appear as a lifeless ball of rock.

It's possible for a player to encounter a planet, but not survive the turn, and so information on the planet isn't marked on the Strategy Map (though they do get a visual idea of suitability in the combat turn – smart players should take note.) In these cases, the planet is marked black with a red X, until the player can properly explore the system. Until a planet is encountered, the system is marked with a star.

Besides the economic information listed above, there are a couple more details about a planet that can be seen here;

Climate Hazard – Underneath the planet name is a bar with a marker. This bar denotes the suitability of the planet's climate for colonization. Any climate hazard between +/- 500 can be colonized – the greater the hazard, the longer it will take to terraform and build up population and infrastructure, which means more cost, but it can be done. Anything outside these hazard areas is just too costly to colonize. However, certain technologies can increase this area to +/- 700. And in some cases, a previously unusable planet to one player will become a viable prospect after another player (from a race with different climate tolerances) has worked on the planet for awhile. Even weapons can alter the climate, both for better and for worse.

Abandon – In some cases, a player may wish to abandon a planet. It's unusual, but not impossible. For example, a player may wish to abandon a planet in order to allow an ally to come in and colonize it. Whatever the strategy behind such a move, this is how a player abandons a planet.

Satellites – If you build defense platforms or encounter a planet with defense platforms, how many there are and of what size class will appear to the bottom left of the Planet View. How many satellites a planet can maintain depends on the size of the planet; planets of sizes 1-3 can only build an orbital ring of ten destroyer platforms, sizes 4-7 can build ten destroyer and ten cruiser platforms, and sizes 8-10 can build a full compliment of ten destroyer, ten cruiser, and ten dreadnought platforms.

Notepad – Each planet and star has a notepad, on which a player can leave notes for future reference. This is handy for reminders if the game is saved and put aside for a while. It's also handy for making notes about surrounding stars that opponents may use to launch an attack.

Overharvest – Left alone, a planet's resources will always be available, but overharvesting (see below) can provide a short-term boost in production, while causing irreparable damage to the planet's resources. By moving this slider, how many resources will be lost next turn will appear in red next to Resources.

Planetary Budget – When a planet is not producing ships, improving its own infrastructure, or terraforming, the planet's entire income will go into trade (savings, research, etc.) This option allows the player to control how much should go into Construction and how much should go into Trade.

The income allocated to Construction can be further split between Terraforming, Infrastructure, and Ship Construction. Sliders for these areas of construction will appear below Planetary Budget when colonization or ship-building is ordered.

Additional Screen Elements

Besides the Side Bar, there are a few other elements on the Strategy screen that are important.

End Turn – Possibly the most important button in the game. After a player has managed his empire to his satisfaction and is ready to commit to those decisions, he hits End Turn. The Strategy screen will remain up until all players have selected to end their turn and combat round begins. Players can continue to view their empire, though they can no longer make any changes – the only place where they can continue to make changes is in the Ship Design screen. More on this later.

News Ticker – along the bottom is a news ticker. At the start of each turn, all-important events are listed here. The left mouse button can be used to click and scroll the ticker back and forth. Left clicking on a news item will pop up a news window in the top left of the screen.

News Window – When a news item in the News Ticker is clicked, more information about that event will appear here, such as ships lost in combat or worlds colonized. This News Window has arrows, left and right, at the bottom of the pop-up window, so a player can cycle around a given turn's events without having to return to the News Ticker. The pop-up can be closed by clicking the X button at the top right.

Chat / Stars / Move Lines – Between the End Turn button and the News Ticker are three buttons;

Chat – This button opens and closes the Chat Window. Sent chat messages will appear briefly at the bottom of the strategy screen, alerting the player to incoming messages, as well as letting them have a look at the message without having to open up the entire chat window. It's important to point out that until you encounter another race and research their language, players of different species will not understand one another in chat or be able to initiate Alliances / Non-Aggression Pacts. Players of the same species, however, can more easily understand one another.

The Chat button can be accessed from every screen in the game, even during Combat.

Stars – Next to Chat is a button that will turn the stars in the 3D map "on" and "off", removing the bright stars from the screen for players who want to see less of the map as a whole and more of their empire in specific.

Move Lines – Similar to the Stars button, this button will turn the move lines, which indicate fleets in transit and where they are transiting to, "on" and "off". There are times during a game where multiple players will be sending multiple fleets off in many directions, and the masses of move lines can be distracting, so the ability to turn them off temporarily can be useful.

Exit / Save / Options Button – At the bottom Right of the Strategy Screen is a round button. Clicking this button will bring up a pop-up menu of three options; Exit the game, Save Game, and Options. On various Strategy sub-screens, such as Ship Design, Ship Build, etc., this button will return you to the main Strategy screen and the 3D Map.

Timer – at the right-most end of the News Ticker, a countdown timer may appear, if the Game Host has set a time limit

Game Info / Trade / Ally / Rank – At the top of the 3D Map is an information bar. On its left is the turn number. Below it is a tab that will open and close, revealing a list of all the players, both human and AI, in the game, as well as what they are doing (this is handy for seeing who is currently in combat and who isn't.)

"Playing" means the player is still involved in making his strategic decisions and hasn't ended his turn. "Done" means the player has committed to his decisions and is waiting for the next turn to start. "Query" means the player has received a combat query about which fights he wishes to personally oversee. "Waiting" means the player has committed to the fights he wishes to control, but is waiting for an opponent, either because that player is being queried or is currently fighting. "Fighting" means the player is in a combat turn.

To the right are three buttons;

Trade - This opens a window that will allow a player to send money and research boosts to their allies.

Ally - These alliances can be initiated using the window that pops up when you press the Ally button (remember, until players encounter other players and research their languages, they cannot set up an Alliance or Non-Aggression Pact.)

Allies can send one another funds or a research boost. As well, allied worlds will refuel and repair any friendly ships in the area.

Rank – Pressing the Rank button will give players a quick look at their standings in various areas of the game, including: Colonies, Technologies researched, Income, Ships, Population, and Output. These are rough indications of a player's progress in a game, not in-depth intelligence on other player empires – in some cases it will be possible for players to be tied (for example, in numbers of colonies, or technologies researched), in which case their standing is rounded down. Two players can be tied for first place in the standings, but both will see themselves as being in second place. The idea behind these Rankings is that players can see where they are seriously falling behind, which will help them decide where to focus their empire's resources.

If anyone is playing as the Hiver, a gate symbol will appear here, as well as a number denoting how much traffic the gate web can handle in a single turn.

Starmap Icons and Overlay

The rest of this manual describes the controls and functions of the game, but a lot of that same information can be found in the markers on the 3D starmap for easy reference. When zoomed away from a planet, the most a player will see is a selection ring, a fleet marker to denote that they have ships there, enemy fleet markers, and in some cases, an exclamation mark to show that they have made a note on that planet. A player's home-world will have a star overlay, to mark it as unique from all the other colonies they may have, which will be marked with a simple tab. Enemy planets the player discovers will be similarly marked in their opponent's color. If those planets have defense platforms -- or in the case of Hivers, a gate -- then special markers will appear.

When zoomed in on a planet, much more information becomes available.



System name – the name of the planet at a given system can be seen at the top of the planet.

Player markings – when a player gains control of a planet, the name at the top will take on that player's color, as well as display their player badge.

System Notes – when a player creates a note for a planet, they will see the note tab, stuck to the planet or system name. Clicking this tab will bring up the note for reading, altering, or deleting.

Ships in System – right under the planet's name is a number count of how many Dreadnoughts, Cruisers, and Destroyers the player has in this system. This count doesn't include defense satellites, which are noted elsewhere. The fleet composition of these ships can be seen using fleet tabs.

Fleet Tabs – to the left of a player's planet are tabs for each fleet they have in system. Each tab shows the number of each size class of ship in that fleet. Clicking a fleet tab will cycle between different tabs, if there is more than one fleet in system. When another player is in system, their ships will appear in fleet tabs to the right of the planet.

Defense Platform Rings – when players build defense satellites, a ring will appear around the planet, one for each of the three size classes. The number of satellites in each ring (to a maximum of ten) will appear at the bottom of the ring.

FLEETS

The rest of the sidebar is devoted to a player's fleets – organizing them, moving them, decommissioning them, and ordering ships with special functions into action. When you select a planet with ships in orbit, or when you select fleets in transit between star systems, a list of fleets will appear.

These lists can be expanded to reveal all the ships in a fleet, or collapsed for easier reading. At the top of a fleet listing is some basic information about the fleet composition (how many Destroyers, Cruisers, and Dreadnoughts) as well as the maximum range of the fleet dependant on the ship with the worst range (either by design or fuel), and average condition of the fleet.

When fleets are given a move order, the destination of the fleet and how many turns it will take to get there is displayed.

When a fleet list is expanded, each ship will have its fuel / range numbers listed, as well as the ship's condition; green means the ship is in good shape, orange means it has taken some notable damage and should be looked at, and red means the ship has taken serious damage, including the loss of an engine or ship section with a special function. If a fleet is unable to jump to another planet or begin a special function (such as colonize), and the fleet / ship condition is marked as red, players will know why.

Above the fleet list are three buttons:

Manage Fleets – When ships are in the same star system, players can organize them. They can move ships from one fleet to another, they can rename fleets, even create custom formations for when the fleet jumps into battle. All this is handled on a sub-screen, which will be covered in greater detail later.

Move – When a fleet of ships is selected, players can click Move. A movement line will appear between the starting position of the fleet and a target planet. The line will be green up to the maximum range of the fleet – beyond that it will be red. Most races can bring tankers and refuel mid-trip in order to complete the jump.

The distance between stars is displayed, which is important information when deciding whether or not it's time to research better engine technology.

Once a destination point is selected, by left-clicking the target planet, orange Move Lines will appear, indicating that there is a fleet headed to this location.

Notes on Human Ships: The exceptions to refueling in the middle of interstellar travel are human fleets. These fleets typically travel from planetary node to planetary node point. Refueling cannot take place in the middle of travel in Node Space. Any point beyond the range of a ship or fleet can be set as a destination, but the ship will have to travel there at slower-than-light speeds and transit will take many, many turns. Players will be asked to confirm when they are attempting travel at sub-light speeds.

Since human fleets have limited Node Line options, but can move very fast across them, movement between distant stars typically means a lot of short jumps to systems along the way, which can be time better spent elsewhere. As such, Human players can set a waypoint path by selecting their starting position, clicking Move, then moving to the system they are trying to reach – the move line will offer the shortest series of Node Lines to get there. This doesn't mean the path is clear of danger or that your ship will have enough fuel to get there – Move line will still display red beyond the point where fuel runs out – but it can be useful in certain circumstances.

Note on Hiver Ships: The Hiver race never developed super-luminal drive engines for their ships, so all travel is at very slow speeds. However, once a gate ship arrives at a planet and is deployed, Hiver ships can be teleported into the system in a single turn. For more information on deploying gate ships, see below in the Special Functions section.

Once a gate ship is deployed, ships can be transported to any other gate, anywhere in the galaxy. There is a limit to the number of ships that can use the gate system in a single turn, but this limit increases with every gate added to the network – and by using certain technologies. The maximum number of ships that can move at once can be found at the top of the Strategy screen, next to the turn number.

Fleet Interception: Destination points don't have to be planets; they can also be ships in mid-jump. Perhaps the player's ship has run out of fuel and he needs to send a tanker. Perhaps it is an enemy fleet, and the player hopes to intercept them before they reach their target planet. In both cases, fleets can be set as destinations, just like setting a planet or star as a destination. Human ships can intercept incoming fleets the same way, but as the target ships aren't in Node Space, they have to travel at sub-light speeds (see above.) Conversely, Human ships traveling in Node Space cannot be intercepted, even by other Human players.

Special – Some ships have special functions that are used during combat. Some are used during the Strategy turn, but are automatic (such as jamming, or deep scan). Some, however, are important enough that they are initiated by the player during the Strategy turn. These are: Colonize, Refuel, Refine, Repair, Mine, Dump Ore, and, for the Hivers, the additional option of Deploy Gate. If a player has any ships with these special functions at a given location, these special functions will appear in a drop-down menu when you click the Special button.

When a special function is selected, a list of all ships capable of that function will appear, and the player can set one, all, or just some of those ships to begin their action. This list will denote what fleet each ship is in, for the player's reference.

In addition to these special features, players will also be presented with the option to scuttle ships (or even whole fleets.) Once a special function is ordered, a Stop option will appear, allowing players to change their minds. In the list of fleets, all ships that have been given an order to begin a special function will have an icon marker denoting this. Once the player hits End Turn, these orders are committed and the results will appear next turn.

Special Orders are pretty straight forward, but it will be useful to go into greater detail on some of them.

Strategy Special Functions

During the Strategy turns, as outlined above, some ships can serve special functions. Initiating each is done exactly the same way through the Special button, but each has important differences.

Colonize – When a Colonizer ship is present at a viable planet (see above for more information on planet climates), players can tell them to colonize. At the start of the next turn, that colony ship will be gone, its materials and inhabitants used to begin the building up of infrastructure, terraforming, and population on the planet. Some technologies will increase a colonizer's ability to seed a planet with colonists and industry, but players can also decide to use more than one Colonizer ship. Each ship adds more colonists, etc. to the effort of turning a planet into a productive part of the empire. Until the turn is ended, players can cancel any colonize order.

Refuel – Tankers and Refinery ships can refuel other ships in the same location, even themselves. Once refueling is initiated, two lists are presented in the refueling window; the list on the left lists all ships in the area capable of refueling ships and how much fuel they are carrying. The list on the right lists all ships in the area needing fuel, and how much they'll need. The overall supply and demand of fuel is shown as two bars at the top, but the lists provide more detailed information.

An auto-refuel button will take all the fuel from the list on the left and apply it to as many ships as possible in the list to the right. This is quick and handy in most cases, but when more fuel is needed than is available, players can manually measure out fuel.

On each ship's fuel bar, dark green denotes their remaining fuel and red denotes how much fuel capacity is currently empty. By left-clicking anywhere on the red part of the bar, fuel up to that point will be added to that ship. How much range a ship has with or without fuel added is shown to the side of the fuel bar. Until the player exits this screen, the refueling hasn't been committed. Once they leave, their refueling orders are committed, even though the player hasn't ended the turn.

When a Tanker or Refinery ship is out of fuel for refueling, they must refill. In order to do this, Tankers must make their way to a friendly colony or to a Refinery ship. Refinery ships, on the other hand, can be ordered to begin Refining (see below) or return to a friendly world for re-supply. Ships at friendly worlds will be automatically refueled by the planet itself, not fuel ships.

Auto-Refuel – Not to be confused with the auto-refuel function on the refuel menu – rather this special function tells a tanker ship to automatically refuel nearby ships. This is handy when a fleet is traveling to a planet or star outside of range and the player doesn't want to manually refuel the ships every time they run dry.

Refine – Refinery ships at dead or un-colonized worlds can refine fuel to refill their supply. A refinery will take more than one turn to refill its supply, depending on how dry it is, but the process can be stopped and restarted at any time. Refining fuel uses up a planet's resource base, so players should be careful about how often they refine at a planet, in case they intend to colonize it at some point.

Repair – Repair ships work very much like refueling ships, but the supply and demand is in terms of damage to ships and the ability to repair that damage. When repair is initiated, a window much like the Refueling window will appear, and in much the same way, players can automatically repair as many ships as possible, or do specific amounts of repair to specific ships.

Like Refueling, once the Repair window is closed, the repairs are committed, even though the turn has not been ended. Unlike refueling, repair ships don't need to replenish their ability to repair – each round a Repair ship is capable of a certain amount of repair. The next turn, they will be capable of the same level of repair again.

While planets are considered to have a ready supply of fuel for ships, and will automatically refuel all friendly ships, a planet's ability to repair is dependant on the level of its development. Even a small planet, once fully developed, is capable of incredible levels of repair, but colonies in their early stages or planets that have suffered damage during an attack will see their ability to repair reduced. Using a planet to repair is the same as using a ship to repair, so the Repair special function will be seen in the Special list at all colony worlds.

Mine – Similar to refining, Mining ships can be ordered to begin mining. Mining ships will remove large amounts of resources from a planet, but rather than turning it into fuel, their intention is to transport it to another planet. Filling a mining ship to capacity can take multiple turns, but the process can be stopped and re-started at any time.

Dump Ore – Once a Mining ship has taken on resources from a planet, they can be dumped at any time by initiating a Dump Ore command. Dumping Ore only takes one turn. This command can be cancelled as long as the player has not ended their turn.

Deploy Gate – Unlike the other three races, the Hivers move between planets at slower-than-light speeds. However, they can deploy gate ships that will allow them to teleport ships from gate to gate in a single turn. If there is an un-deployed gateship at a planet, players can use the Special button to deploy one, and only one ship (there can only be one gateship in a system at a time.) The order to deploy can be cancelled as long as the player has not ended the turn.



THE STRATEGY TURN – SUB-SCREENS

While the main Strategy screen controls a great deal of a player's empire, certain features of the game require a screen all of their own. These sub-screens are Empire Overview, Research, Ship Design, Ship Build, and Fleet Manager.

Empire Overview

At the top left of the Strategy screen, below the player's avatar and icon badge, is the Budget Micro-view pie chart. This small chart gives players a quick, at-a-glance look at their empire. Clicking on it will open up the Empire Overview screen – the main side bar is retained for comparison and reference, but a wealth of new information is now available to players. Along the top are five tabs that will access different parts of the Overview: these are Colonies/Budget, Fleets, Explored Systems, Enemy Colonies, and Event History.

By default the screen will open to the Colonies/Budget tab. The budget pie chart can be viewed with a legend, showing exact values for each portion.

To the left is a list of all the player's colonies and their details. This provides an excellent way to compare planets and their progress, output, number of defense platforms, etc. Double clicking on any of the planet details will sort the list using that information – right-clicking on colony listings will bring up a list of sorting options. Double clicking the planet will close the Overview screen and return the player to the star map, now focusing on the planet selected. The planet Note system can be accessed here as well, using the familiar note tab to the top left of all planets.

The *Fleets* tab lists every ship the player has in the game and what fleet it belongs to. Besides providing a quick look at the status of the ships - their damage, their Special orders, their level of fuel – fleets can be double-clicked, which will close the Overview screen and return the player to the star map, focusing on the position of that fleet. Players that use this list should probably rename their fleets and ship designs whenever possible (more on renaming fleets and ships below): while the default names are quick and easy, they are not the best way to distinguish

two important fleets from one another. Once the proper level of technology has been researched and the player can set the positioning of ships in a fleet, these layouts can be viewed to the right of the list.

Explored Systems is similar to a player's list of colonies, but the list is of all visited systems that have not been colonized. This list is important when a player is looking for good planets to mine, or would like to find a planet that was not habitable earlier, but through research can now be colonized.

Enemy Colonies, like *Explored Systems* and the player's colony list, lists all hostile colonies for quick access.

Finally, *Event History* is a running list of the in-game events over the previous 50 turns. Like the events that can be viewed in the main Strategy screen, these events will contain details on the event and can be double-clicked to take the player to the planet at which the event occurred.

Research

The Research screen is a 3D representation of the tech tree. The view of the tech tree can be changed using mouse controls similar to the 3D star map. Left clicking a tech icon selects that technology – double left-clicking will zoom the camera in close on the icon, revealing more information about the technology. Double left-clicking again will zoom the camera back out to its default position. And the mouse wheel will zoom the camera in and out at any time. Holding the right mouse button down and moving the mouse button left and right will rotate the camera. Moving the mouse up and down will raise and lower the camera's view.

At the top left is a drop-down list of each technology researched and the turn at which the research was complete. When research is underway, the top of the screen will show the technology being researched, how much of the research is complete, and how many turns, approximately, remain until the research is successful.

The number of turns is approximate, as several factors can affect the outcome. In general, it is possible for research to go over budget – it is also possible for the research to have a breakthrough and finish sooner. To the right of the screen is the Micro Budget chart and the Imperial Budget slider from the Main screen. Players can increase or decrease the amount of money going into research, which will increase or decrease the amount of time it will take for the research to finish.

Below the active research progress bar is a drop-down menu, labeled Boost Research, which will allow you to dump a one-time amount of extra funding into research. This can be handy, but the wilder the investment, the greater the chances it will cause a lab accident, which can at best set back progress a few turns and at worst set research back to square one and destroy life and property on a colony world.

At the bottom Left of the screen is the Start Research button. When a technology has been selected, clicking this will begin research. The button will change to End Research – research can be ended at any point during a strategy turn. If the research task is partly complete and it is important to change the focus of research to another technology, all the progress on the original technology is not lost, but rather slowly decreases. It is possible to research a technology quickly, then pick up the previous research technology with some progress remaining.

The bar at the bottom contains a button to access chat, the name of a selected technology, and the button to exit back to the Strategy screen.

Note On Research: The tech tree in *Sword of the Stars* is dynamic and random. Core technologies will always be available, but other peripheral technologies may be there one game, gone the next. Some technologies won't become available until research in a different area unlocks them.

Special Research

There is another drop-down menu, opposite Boost Research, for Special Research. Special Research is a research opportunity that doesn't normally appear in most games – they are always a surprise. A number of things may produce one of these unique research opportunities. Should a player encounter an alien Asteroid Monitor at a planet, they will get the opportunity, through Special Research, to hack the Monitor and gain control of its formidable weapons. Another way to gain a Special Research opportunity is by having a Repair and Salvage Cruiser at a battle – in the wake of combat, there's a chance that the Repair and Salvage Cruiser will collect something useful from the wreckage, a technology you may not have access to in your research tree. The Cruiser does not have to be involved in the combat; it just has to be in-system. These research tasks can be selected here, rather than from the Tech Tree. How much of your total research investment is put towards these special projects depends on the overall output of your empire – the larger your empire, the more it can invest in these side-projects!

Ship Design

The Ship Design screen is where players can plan new ships or alter existing designs. At the top left is a list of all current ship designs. As new size classes open up, the list will be broken up into three areas – clicking on the size class title will close the current list of ships and open up the new list of designs.

Selecting a design will bring up all that ship's details to the screen. The name of the design will appear at the top, followed by information about its armor, cost, weight, range, speed, and number of weapons. Similar to the weapons panel (see below), weapon icons will be displayed beside the list of weapon turrets, and clicking on each turret will highlight the turrets with that particular weapon type.

In the middle of the screen is the ship, as it would appear in combat. Below that are the names of each of the three sections--Command, Mission, and Engine. Arrows to the side of the name allow players to cycle between their available sections (each change in the section will be reflected in the ship above), or players can left-click the name and a drop-down menu of all sections will appear. Underneath the section name, any optional technologies the player can add to that section will appear as a selection of check boxes. Clicking one of these boxes will add the technology to the section – appropriate changes to the Ship Stats will appear above the ship and an icon for that technology will appear above that section for easy visual reference.

An information icon next to the name of each section will call up greater detail about that section, including its base armor and its special functions.

To the left of the ship displayed and under the designs list, is the Weapons Layout panel. On this panel is a top-down view of the design, showing the banks in each section. Each icon shows what weapons are in that bank and the number of those weapons appears in the bottom left of the icon. Clicking on an icon will bring up a display of available weapons and their names – selecting one from the list will place it into that weapons bank. Right clicking a selection will place that weapon into all banks of the same size in the entire ship design.

When a bank is selected, the position of each turret in that bank will be highlighted on the ship displayed. By left-clicking, holding, and moving the mouse up or down, the player can rotate the design for inspection. Being able to see where a weapon will be placed can be handy in deciding which weapon that should be.

Once the player is happy with the design, he can click Save Design in the bottom left of the screen. The player will be prompted to name the design if so desired, otherwise it will be given a default name. If the name for that design already exists, the game will automatically add a version designation to the design name. When a design is selected from the list, but no changes are made, the Save Design button will read Remove Design, allowing players to get rid of old designs they no longer use.

Ship Build

In layout, the Ship Build screen is very similar to the Ship Design screen. The top left has a list of available designs, organized by Ship Size Class. Selecting a design from this list will bring up a display of the ship in the middle of the screen along with all its Ship Stats.

The major differences are at the bottom, where basic financial details pertinent to building of ships are shown: how much money is available to spend on building ships, and the basic production levels of the planets building. The empire's treasury at the bottom is very important – as players queue ships to be built, their cost is deducted from the treasury. If the player runs into debt while building, the treasury will display in red.

The economic sliders of the planet building the ships, which are duplicates of the controls you'd see on the main Strategy Screen, can be used to direct more or less of that planet's output towards construction. This is handy if the planet is undergoing infrastructure build-up or terraforming, but the player needs to build some ships as well. The more output devoted to building, the less turns it will take to build (the number of turns it will take to build a ship can be seen on its listing in the queue.) Adjusting the sliders will allow the player to find the right balance between getting ships produced and working to improve the planet's habitability, population, and overall ability to contribute to the empire.

Once a player ends the turn, ship production takes place. Should you return to the build queue at a given planet, the remaining un-built ships will still be in the list, but the build time in turns will have changed. The ship at the top of the list will also display just how much of it is complete, which is handy, as ships can be removed from the list at any time. Ships that have not begun to be built can be canceled; the invested cost will be returned to the treasury. Ships in the middle of production, although they can be removed from the list in order to start the next or a new ship's production, will result in a loss of the investment, so canceling such a build order should be carefully considered first.

Note On Build and Design screens: At the bottom of each screen is an information button, next to the Chat button. Pressing this button will toggle information overlays for each section, outlining their basic function and other helpful information.

Fleet Manager

Fleet Manager is accessible at the very start of the game. However, as a player improves Command and Control technology, the features of the fleet manager will increase. Initially, Fleet Manager can be used to move ships between (or separate them from) your fleets. When a planet is building a number of ships, they are all added automatically to the same fleet. However, when it comes time to use those ships, players may wish to separate them into different fleets – perhaps in order to send them off in different directions.

To do this, open Fleet Manager – along the left is a list of all the ships in all the fleets at the selected planet. Just as in the Main Strategy Screen, the lists can be collapsed and expanded, and will show the fuel, range, health of each ship, and any icons denoting a special function order it may be carrying out. Select a ship and then hold and drag

it around – dragging them and dropping them into a new fleet list will add that ship to that fleet. Dragging and dropping it outside of the fleets will place the ship into a new fleet. Players can also drag and drop whole fleets by selecting the fleet name, or multiple ships from multiple fleets by shift-selecting ships from the list.

When the player has researched Command and Control abilities, and has built some CnC ships, it is possible to create a custom formation for ships. Multiple fleets in the same system may have their own CnC ship, in which case the formations can be set for each ship. To do this, players select the CnC ship they would like to work with by selecting the circular button to the right of the fleet name. The CnC ship in that fleet will appear in the middle of the Fleet Manager grid. Players can drag and drop that ship around the grid as well as drag and drop ships onto the grid from the fleet lists – however, any ship dragged onto the grid will be added to that CnC ship's fleet. Selecting the ships on the grid will highlight them in the lists, and conversely, selecting ships from the lists will cause any that are on the grid to be highlighted.

CnC ships have a maximum command point value of ships they can control – each ship added to a formation will be deducted from the total. All this information, as well as reinforcements for the fleet (which can also be organized – ships at the top of the list will reinforce first) appears to the right of the grid.

Just as in the main Strategy screen, any ships that refuel or repair can have their special functions accessed from the Fleet Manager screen, saving players from having to go back to the Strategy Screen.

Note on fielding fleets: The more ships one combatant has at a battle, compared to another, the more command points worth of ships they can field in combat. A player is awarded two additional command points for every five ships they outnumber their opponent.

THE COMBAT TURN – GOING TO WAR

Combat Query

The bridge between the Strategy screen and Combat is the Combat Query. When two or more opponents encounter one another, all combat opportunities will be presented to the player in the Combat Query window. Players can decide which combats they'd like to control directly and which ones they'll leave the AI to handle.

To the right of each encounter is an icon that can be clicked. A pair of rifles means the player will control the combat, and a computer screen means the AI will handle the fight. Players then click done, the game compares their decisions, and starts handing players over to combat. When a player has researched Spy-beams or FTL Broadband, a third icon of a satellite dish may appear next to a combat – this indicates that while the player has no ships in another system, he is able, if he wishes, to spy on other people's combats. These viewing opportunities can be skipped, if the player wishes.

It's possible some players may have to wait for their combat, if an opponent is engaged in another fight – players waiting for combat can bring down the list of players from the Game Info bar (see above) on the main Strategy screen and see who is fighting and who isn't.

Controlling Combat – The Basics

Once a player has entered combat, controlling ships and engaging the enemy is very easy. Players only need to know how to control the camera, select objects, and move their ships to get started.

Camera Controls

In a combat level, the camera controls are similar to those in the 3D Starmap or the Technology Tree. The camera can be rotated by holding the right mouse button and moving the mouse. The mouse wheel zooms in and out on a focused object – if the player doesn't have a mouse wheel, clicking and holding both the left and right mouse button, then moving the mouse forwards and back will accomplish the same thing. And clicking the third mouse button on a ship or other object will set that as the camera's focus – again, if the player only has a two-button mouse, clicking both the left and right buttons at once on an object will focus the camera on that object.

Ship Selection

Left-clicking on one of your ships will select it. Clicking and dragging the left mouse button will bandbox select multiple ships. If the player has selected a number of their ships, holding the Select Key while left-clicking on a ship will add or subtract that ship from the group.

Targeting

Left-clicking on an enemy ship will select it as a target. Players manually select their main targets, but any weapon that has an enemy target in range will shoot at it, which is a big help to the player in big battles.

Moving

Right-clicking on an area of space will tell your selected ships to move to that point.

Controlling Combat – Advanced Controls

Once a player knows how to move and fire with his ships, he has the basics to get into the action. But there are a few things that will give even greater control over battles.

Targeting Control

Where players click, on a target, will be exactly the spot where their weapons attempt to fire. Accuracy differs between weapons, so the guns may not hit that exact point, but they will attempt to fire where commanded. This is handy if the player wishes to disable a ship's engine, destroy the special function of a command of mission section, or destroy a specific weapon turret before they worry about anything else. The ability to change camera focus to an enemy ship (see above) is particularly handy for this purpose. Certain weapons are fired manually – read about the weapons panel for more information.

Special Targeting

There are times when a player may need to target something special, something that cannot be selected manually or automatically, such as the probable location of a cloaked ship or a friendly ship (yes, it can happen.) To dumb-fire, hold ALT while targeting as normal.

Combat User Interface

Overlaid on the screen during combat is the Heads-up Display, which provides players with additional control and information.

At the top left of the screen is the name of the area, usually taken from any nearby planet – beside it is a box that provides a graph of the planet's population. The emptier the box, the less people on the world.

Below this are Fleet buttons. From left to right, they are; Retreat, Break Off, Normal, Stand Off, Close to Attack, and Cease-fire.

Retreat – when ships enter the system, if they can survive long enough to prepare their interstellar engines, they can retreat from the system. A timer over the button will countdown until the engines are ready – once the timer reaches zero, players can press the retreat button and their fleets will retreat.

Human ships will move towards the nearest node point and will jump when they reach it – to jump from a particular node point, players have to move their ships to that node point in the combat level. Other ships will retreat to the nearest friendly planetary system or back to the system from which they entered.

Break Off – This button will have all ships return to the point where they entered the system.

Normal – This sets all ships to a neutral disposition. They will respond to your move commands and stop once they reach that position.

Stand Off – This sets all ships to a defensive stance, where they will automatically attempt to stay at maximum range from their targets to fight.

Close to Attack – This sets all ships to an offensive stance. They will aggressively engage their targets and nearby ships.

Cease-fire – All ships on the battlefield will hold their fire until the button is turned off.

Underneath the fleet buttons are a fleet list of all available reinforcements – the list can be expanded or collapsed if the player wishes and in either case it will go transparent, allowing for more view of the combat. Mousing over the list will brighten it again for easier reading.

Ships at the top of the list will be the first to come in to replace fallen ships. Players with CnC ships in the system can pick the next ship by clicking on any ship in the list – that ship will then become the top-most reinforcement.

At the bottom of the screen are the buttons to activate the chat button, as well as the combat timer – combat rounds always have a time limit before combat closes, and players return to the Strategy screen to plan the next round.

Combat User Interface – Weapons Panel

At the top right of the screen is the Weapons Panel – it will be familiar to players, as it is the same panel that appears in the Ship Design screen. However, this interface has some extra functions. When a player selects a ship, its weapons panel will appear, outlining all available weapon banks – a red outline means the weapons in that bank don't have an available shot and a green outline means they do. The number in the bottom left of the weapon icon denotes how many turrets are in that bank. If all the turrets are destroyed, the icon will change. There is a recharge time to all weapons, which can be seen by the target/no-target outline disappearing and slowly coming back as the weapon recharges.

Certain weapons, assault shuttles, bio-missiles, and siege drivers, are fired manually - after selecting a target, click the weapon's icon on the weapon panel to fire. Mines use a similar system, using the weapon icon to begin and stop mine dropping.

Underneath the weapons panel is a list of all selected ship types. As different ship types have different weapons, they can't all be displayed on the weapons panel at once. To see the weapons panel of a particular ship type, players just have to click that type from the list. This is very important when organizing and controlling certain weapon banks.

To the left of the weapons panel are three buttons, for setting up to three different weapon groups for a ship (or group of ships.) By default, all weapon banks on a ship are in the first group, but by selecting the second or third group, and then right-clicking on a weapon icon, that bank will be assigned to that group. Now players can give their ships up to three targets (in addition to any automatic shots a ship may take.) Inset in each group button is a cease-fire button, just like the cease-fire button for the whole fleet described above. This cease-fire order will only affect the weapons assigned to that group.

Ship Damage – Where's the Health Bar?

Combat in *Sword of the Stars* is short and detailed – being able to see what's going on under chaotic circumstances is not only an advantage, it is often crucial. Therefore, the health of a ship is displayed not as another distracting overlay, but through visually logical damage: Weapons scoring, burning plasma fires, and destroyed sections.

When a section has taken a small amount of serious damage, small plasma fires will be visible – when it has taken a lot of serious damage, bigger plasma fires will be visible, and the section is close to being destroyed.

When a section is destroyed, it will be reduced to wreckage, and all weapon icons in the weapons panel will be listed as inoperable. Destroyer and Cruiser class ships can survive the loss of one section, but the loss of a second section will be critical and the ship will be destroyed. At the Dreadnought size class, given their size and Heavy Platform construction, all three sections will remain operational until critical damage is reached and the ship is destroyed. This is one of many reasons why Dreadnoughts are terrifying opponents.

First Contact!

Diplomacy in *Sword of the Stars* can sometimes be as simple as who shoots first. To avoid any misunderstandings when you first meet an opponent, all ships will be set to Hold Fire. This is particularly important if any of your ships is armed with missile weapons, which have a great deal of range. Once the combat round has begun, you can turn the weapons fire back on, as outlined above, by selecting your ships and clicking the hold fire button.

SURPRISE ENCOUNTERS

Meteors, Derelicts, and Other Dangers

While it would be nice to carry out galactic conquest with only the enemy to worry about, the galaxy is a dangerous place. Meteor Showers often threaten young and old colony worlds – while larger worlds can weather these storms, they can take terrible damage. Smaller worlds or young colonies can be wiped out if players aren't careful, so players should be prepared to destroy all incoming rocks. While meteor showers are a difficult challenge, successfully warding off a storm will provide that besieged planet with a resource bonus.

While exploring planets, players may encounter alien derelicts – these long forgotten hulks are outfitted with automatic defense systems that are still fighting wars that ended long ago. While a nasty surprise for lone scout ships, they must be dealt with before colonization of the nearby planet can begin – dealt with properly, players will enjoy a boost in their research the following turn, thanks to being able to examine the alien technology. There are other hazards players may encounter while exploring. Worse still, there are rumours of hazards that are exploring the galaxy for themselves. Players will have to be careful to protect themselves – they may even be forced to form alliances with their opponents, a temporary peace so the war may go on!

GAME SET-UP

Sword of the Stars is an open-ended game, where the key goal is galactic domination. The distinction between a single-player game and a multiplayer game is only in the number of other players that join you. Seeing as Sword of the Stars allows for players to leave and later re-join a game in progress, even that simple distinction become less clear.

When looking to play a game, players can either start a singleplayer game, where they fight against AI opponents, host a multiplayer game which other players can join them, or look for someone else's multiplayer game to join.

Multiplayer games can be set up for play over a local area network or over the Internet, in which case other players can find the game through Gamespy or Xfire.

There are two types of games that player can enjoy, either alone or with other players. The first is a custom game, wherein the game host can select the size and shape of the galaxy, set the number of open positions for other players, or AI opponents, and certain conditions of the game, such as strategy turn time limits, combat time limits, number of starting colonies, and the research / economic efficiency of the races. If the host likes, certain species can be excluded, limiting the playable race options for other players. As well, AI levels can be set, and games password protected. The second game type is a scenario game (which will be discussed later).



Custom



Scenario

Custom Games

There are two main things to decide when setting up a custom game – what is the shape of the galaxy and how many stars does it contain?



Sphere



Clusters



Spiral



Arm



Hourglass



Rift

The size and shape of the galaxy can be viewed in a window on the set-up screen – similar to in-game, players can use the mouse to rotate the map preview around for a better look. Holding the right mouse button and moving the mouse around, will rotate the map. The mouse wheel or holding both mouse buttons and moving the mouse forwards and back will zoom the map preview in and out.

Beneath the size and shape set-up are other useful game options;

Number of Players – By default this is set to 8, but the player can reduce the number here. Additional slots can be closed in the Game Lobby, but slots closed here in the game set-up cannot be opened up again in the Game Lobby.

Playable Races – Players may wish to limit what species can be present in the game.

Strategic Turn Length – By default there is no time limit to the strategic turn, but more accomplished players may wish to impose one. If the game is saved and restarted at a later time, the time limit can be adjusted or even removed.

Combat Turn Length – Four minutes is the recommended turn length, but players have the option to reduce it to three minutes or increase it to ten minutes.

Alliances – Alliances can be turned on or off here.

Random Encounters – There are a number of random challenges in Sword of the Stars. If players wish to just focus on fighting one another, these can be turned off.

AI Difficulty Level – If the player sets-up the game to include AI opponents, this dictates what kind of challenge they will be.

Initial Treasury – In a standard game players each start with 50,000 in the treasury, but this can be increased up to 1,000,000.

Initial Colonies – In a standard game players each start with the lone home-world, but this can be increased up to 6 worlds in total.

Initial Technologies – Players can start with their basic level of technology, which allows them to build a limited number of ship types. Anything beyond that has to be researched. However, when setting up the game, up to an additional 6 technologies can be added at the start of the game. What those technologies are is randomized, like the rest of the tech-tree.

Economic Efficiency / Research Efficiency – Depending on the level of challenge the player would like to introduce to the game, the efficiency of all player empires to research and generate income can be increased or decreased by 50%.

Once all the variables are set, clicking Create Game will take you to the Lobby, after prompting the player for a game name. This name is the name the game will be saved under and it is the name that will be displayed in multiplayer game match-up screens (either LAN, Gamespy, or Xfire.)

In the lobby, players can set the race they wish to play as, their avatar, their badge and player color. They also have the option of setting the same things for the AI players. If they wish to, all these things can be set randomly. Again, once everything is set, Launch Game, and the battle begins!

Scenario Games

There are a lot of options to a Custom Game that adjust the challenges a player will face. However, players can also play one of a selection of Scenario games, where special rules, conditions, and goals apply, which are outlined on the Scenario set-up screen. Some options can be set by the player, but not as many as in a Custom Game. Players can still set AI difficulty levels, strategy turn time-limits, combat time-limits, and whether random encounters will occur during the game.

Each scenario is designed with a certain number of players in mind – this number is displayed next to the scenario's name. Some scenarios even restrict what the races are. If a player plays a scenario alone, the other slots will always be occupied by an AI. But just like a custom game, players can host scenarios as multiplayer games.

MULTIPLAYER

There is very little distinction between a singleplayer game and a multiplayer game in *Sword of the Stars*, as the game is very flexible in terms of starting, saving, restarting, and joining a game. A singleplayer game is when one player sets up a game where they play against AI opponents. Once that game is started and auto-saved, may options become available. Players can stop playing and pick the game up again at a later time. They can re-start the game as a multiplayer game, allowing other players to join across a LAN or the Internet.

Players can leave their positions mid-game and allow the AI to take over for them. These AI players can be set to follow certain styles of play:

Maintain – the AI will continue to research new technology, but will not attempt to alter your empire.

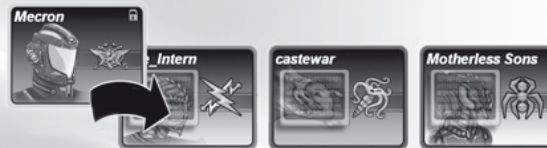
Defend – the AI will defend existing colony worlds, but will not attempt to explore or colonize new planets, nor will it attack other players.

Expand – the AI will attempt to expand your empire and defeat your enemies.

If the player chooses, they can leave the slot open for other human players to join – yes, it is possible to join mid-game! If a player starts a game and a couple of people join, additional slots can be maintained by the AI and a human player can join in on those slots at a later time.

Player Slots

In the Game Lobby, each player (either AI or human) occupies a slot – the host of the game can move players between slots by dragging and dropping one slot onto another. For example, when a player joins a game that they have not participated in previously, they have no set slot position, so the game will automatically move them into the first available slot. It may be that they'd prefer to play a different slot, or the proper owner of the current slot will join shortly, and they should move. With some simple shuffling, the host can put everyone in their proper position.



Locking Slots

When a player is occupying a slot position in the game lobby, they may wish to lock that slot in order to control who can play their position. That way, players who are uncomfortable with just anyone taking over for them can ensure that only AI players, or players they give permission to can play that position. A player's slot will have a Lock icon in the top right corner – clicking this icon will prompt the player for a password with which to lock the slot.

Leaving and Re-joining Mid-Game

Players can leave mid-game and rejoin at a later time if they so choose. As mentioned above, password protecting a player slot can keep other players from occupying that slot. When a player chooses to leave a game in progress, they can do so by selecting Options, and quitting to the main menu. Also in the Options menu is Set AI Policy – By setting the policy, a player can tell the AI how they'd like it to handle their empire while they are away.

When a player is ready to re-join the action, they simply find the game in the game listings (or manually enter the IP), click join, and then wait for the next strategy turn to begin. At that point, they will re-enter the game.

Finding a Game

Sword of the Stars incorporates Gamespy and Xfire, to help players find friends and active online games. Users who have Gamespy Arcade installed can use it to find buddies online, chat, and meet up for a game – some of the same functionality is used in the *Sword of the Stars* game lobby. As well, Xfire users can use that system to find other players online and even chat in-game, both text and voice-over-IP!

For more information, please visit these websites;

www.gamespyarcade.com

www.xfire.com

Beaming a Game

If the host of a game needs to leave mid-game, but the rest of the group wishes to keep playing, the game will be saved and then automatically transferred to all other players during shutdown. One member of the remaining group can then load the saved game for the others to join.

CREDITS

This Game is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters, and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the developers imaginations. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or localities is entirely coincidental.

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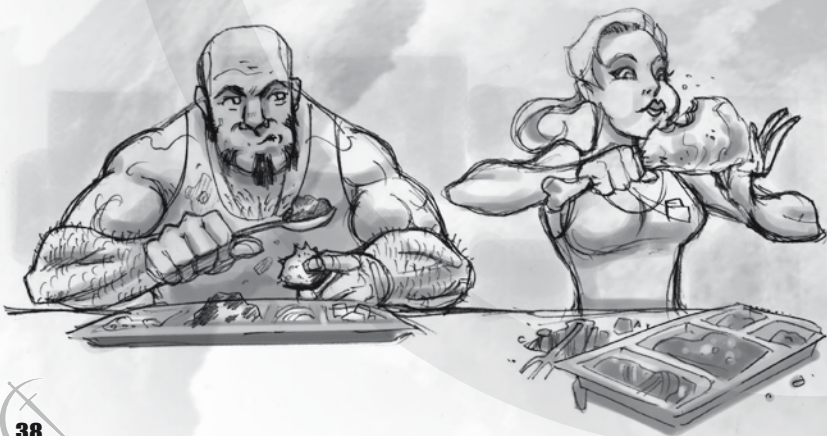
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KERBEROS PRODUCTIONS

LEAD DESIGN

MARTIN CIRULIS

DESIGN

CHRIS STEWART
ARINN DEMBO

LEAD ARTIST

CHRIS GERSPACHER

3D ARTISTS

TERESA JOHNSON
JOHN KU
CLAIRE ROBERTS

2D ARTIST

KEN LEE

PROGRAMMING LEAD

DARREN GRANT

PROGRAMMING

DAVID SALSAMAN
RICHARD HAWKES

ALIEN DESIGN

ARINN DEMBO
MARTIN CIRULIS
KEN LEE

CINEMATICS

CHRIS GERSPACHER
CHRIS STEWART

ADDITIONAL ART

ADRIAN DIMALANTA
ALEX MCGILVRAY
LEE SALO

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING

JASON WYLLIE

PRODUCER

CHRIS STEWART

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

LANCE DAVIS

CONTROLLER

GLORIA DAVIS

MUSIC COMPOSITION / STUDIO PRODUCTION

PAUL RUSKAY
STUDIO X PRODUCTIONS

SOUND EFFECTS / DIALOGUE EDITING

ROB PLOTNIKOFF
GREG SABITZ

VOICE ACTING

TOREN ATKINSON
MATT ANDERSON
ARINN DEMBO
TAYLOR LATOUR
MAYA MATTHEW

ADDITIONAL VOICE

MARTIN CIRULIS
TERESA JOHNSON
CHRIS STEWART

INTERN

SAM FREEMANTLE

TESTERS

SAM FREEMANTLE
TROY BRUCKNER
DARCEY MACINNES

SPECIAL THANKS

PAUL AND AMY TOBIA
KEITH DUROCHER
THE DARKEST OF THE HILLSIDE
THICKETS
PENNY ARCADE
JEREMY HOFFMAN & G4TV
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ROB EDGAR
DAN IRISH
DOUG TRONSGARD
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VICE PRESIDENT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

STEVE WALL

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EVELINE VAN BERCHUM

UK SALES MANAGER

HOWARD NEWMARK

GRAPHIC ARTS AND PACKAGE DESIGN

MICHAEL VAN ZIJL

ASSOCIATE GRAPHIC DESIGNER

MELISSA MEEUWSEN

WEBMASTER

WOUTER KAMPMANN

LEAD TESTER

THOMAS LUND

TESTERS

SCP TESTERS:

ROB RIBBERS
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DIDIER PIPPEL
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THIBAUT DEVIGNE
NATHALIE BONIN

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you encounter a software problem when installing or playing the game and the particular quandary could not be found in this manual, or solved by updating your computer with the latest audio or video drivers, you may contact our helpdesk.

Before sending any emails to our helpdesk, we strongly advise you to visit our website at <http://www.lighthouse-interactive.com> and browse to your particular game forum. In most cases, known issues, patches or updates are listed there. If your problem cannot be found in this manual or our website, then please send an email to: support@lighthouse-interactive.com

When contacting us, be sure to include:

- A brief description of the problem.
- The hardware configuration of your computer.
- Information on the circumstances, under which the error occurred.

EPILEPSY WARNING

WARNING READ BEFORE USING YOUR VIDEO GAME SYSTEM READ THIS NOTICE BEFORE YOU OR YOUR CHILD PLAYS ANY COMPUTER GAME

A very small percentage of individuals have a condition which may cause them to experience epileptic seizures or have momentary loss of consciousness when viewing certain kinds of flashing lights or patterns that are commonly present in our daily environment. These persons may experience seizures while watching some kinds of television pictures or playing certain computer games. Players who have not had any previous seizures may nonetheless have an undetected epileptic condition. If you or anyone in your family has experienced symptoms linked to an epileptic condition (e.g. a seizure or loss of awareness), immediately consult your physician before playing any computer games. We recommend that parents observe their children while they play computer games. If you or your child experience any of the following symptoms: dizziness, altered vision, eye or muscle twitching, involuntary movements, loss of awareness, disorientation, or convulsions, discontinue immediately and consult your physician before resuming play.

FOLLOW THESE PRECAUTIONS WHENEVER USING COMPUTER GAMES

- When playing computer games, do not sit or stand too close to the monitor. Play as far back from the screen as possible.
- Play computer games on the smallest available monitor.
- Do not play if you are tired or need sleep.
- Always play in a well lit room.
- Be sure to take a 10 to 15 minute break every hour while playing.

REPETITIVE STRAIN WARNING

Some people may experience fatigue or discomfort after playing for a long time. Regardless of how you feel, you should ALWAYS take a 10 to 15 minute break every hour while playing. If your hands or arms become tired or uncomfortable while playing, stop and rest. If you continue to experience soreness or discomfort during or after play, listen to the signals your body is giving you. Stop playing and consult a doctor. Failure to do so could result in long term injury. If your hands, wrist or arms have been injured or strained in other activities, use of your system could aggravate the condition. Before playing, consult a doctor.

APPENDIX: HOTKEY LIST

Tactical

F :Focus on object under mouse (same as middle click)
CTRL+0~9 :Assign selection group.
0~9 :Recall selection group. (pressing twice focuses on lead ship in the group)
H :Toggle HUD visibility.
S :Issue all stop order to selected ships.
TAB/SHIFT+TAB :Cycle forward/backward through your individual ships.
DELETE :Clear targets for selected ships.
ESCAPE :Clear ship selection.
PAUSE :Pause/un-pause game in singleplayer.
SPACE :Open and close Sensors screen.
SHIFT-SPACE :Step ahead one frame when paused.
R :Toggle reserves list.
W :Toggle weapon panel and selection list.
C :Toggle cloak and intangibility for selected ships.
CTRL+C :Toggle follow/free camera control.

Strategic

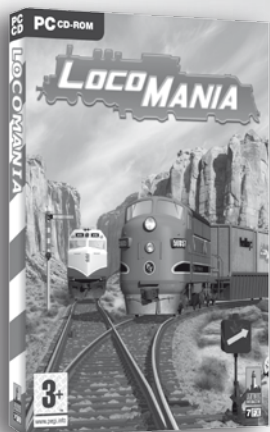
ESCAPE :Back out of screen/mode.
HOME :Focus on your home system.
E :Open Empire overview
B :Open build screen.
D :Open design screen.
R :Open research screen.
F :Open fleet manager screen.
M :Toggle fleet move.
SHIFT :Override Human waypoint pathing and direct a straight path.
CTRL-C :Open Colonize window
CTRL-G :Open Deploy Gate window
CTRL-R :Open Refueling window
CTRL-SHIFT-R :Open Repair window
CTRL-M :Open Mining window
CTRL-D :Open Dump Ore window
CTRL-SHIFT-S :Open Ship Scuttle window
CTRL-A :Toggle Auto-Refuel.
CTRL-SHIFT-A :Toggle Auto-Repair.
CTRL-S :Open Cancel Operations window

General

PRINT SCREEN :Take a screenshot, in both the Strategy screens and combat, which will be saved to the Screenshot directory in the game folder.
SHIFT-PRINT SCREEN : Take a screenshot, with HUD, when in Tactical combat.
CTRL-O :Open the Options Menu.
F8 :Toggle chat window open and closed.
QUICK CHAT :Opens chat window and immediately allows players to type their message. Does not close Chat Window again (see F8)

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- PC Utilities -



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- Worthplaying -

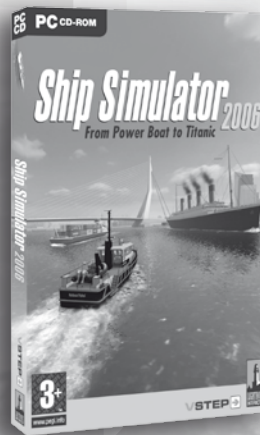
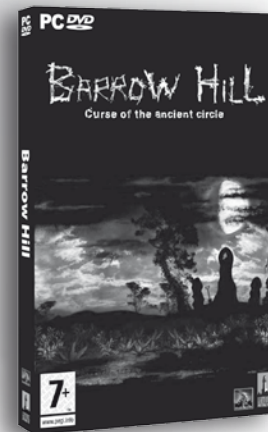


KEEPSAKE

Adventure game set in a fantasy realm
"Syberia with a touch of Harry Potter!"
8/10 - Boomtown -

BARROW HILL

Suspenseful adventure game set in eery Cornwall
"Barrow Hill has a wonderful creepy feel to it. This deserves a place on your shelf." **9/10**
- JustAdventure -



SHIP SIMULATOR 2006

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- icnetwork.co.uk -

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