

STARFIRE

3rd EDITION

REVISED

Sample file



Foreword

STARFIRE is a gaming system that simulates both tactical combat and strategic-level campaigns in space. The game is set in a “future history” in which such interstellar super powers as the relatively peaceful Terran Federation and war-like Khanate of Orion clash in huge and bloody wars or war upon or ally with such smaller empires as the Empire of Gormus, the Ophiuchi Association, and the Rigelian Protectorate.

The *STARFIRE* system has been around for many years, progressing through a series of modifications and revisions as designers sought to expand the outstanding potential of the original, purely tactical game into a more comprehensive system. Some of the revisions were good ideas; some weren't. Too often, they resulted in patches and new rules that superseded those already in print and required continual cross-referencing between several sets of “official” rules.

STARFIRE comes of age in this edition. Old *STARFIRE* hands will find it does many of the things the older games did in different ways, but they will still recognize the clean “feel” of the system.

Reorganizing and revising the previous rules turned out to be a bigger project than first expected (doesn't it always?), and the final product is too extensive to fit into a single release. Accordingly, it has been released in three stages: *STARFIRE* (which combines the revised and updated tactical rules from all previous releases, plus an upgraded list of tech systems and weapons); *IMPERIAL STARFIRE* (which does the same thing for the strategic system); and THE STARS AT WAR (*STARFIRE* scenarios).

These products are designed as a single set of sequentially numbered rules, with the rule booklets laid out to allow players to hole punch them for easy insertion in a loose-leaf binder. Because of this, players will find cross-references to later rules they do not yet have. Don't worry. You won't need them to play out *STARFIRE*'s internal scenarios, and all will become clear as you work with the other products. In the end, you will have one comprehensive set of rules, more closely interfaced and reorganized into hopefully groupings that are more comfortable. (Promise!)

— David M. Weber {minor editing by the SDS}

This is the 3rd printing of the 3rd edition of *STARFIRE*. This printing includes all changes from Sky Marshal #1 and #2 and any errata from either Communique or Electronic Communique pertaining to Starfire's tactical rules. This printing includes references to material presented in *IMPERIAL STARFIRE*, *Crusade*, *Alkelda Dawn*, and *ISW-4*. For the most part, you can ignore these references until you get those products.

NOTE TO PREVIOUS *CLASSIC STARFIRE PLAYERS*: The 3rd edition of *STARFIRE* is now collectively known as *CLASSIC STARFIRE*. The rules are available through our website at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/starfire>. About 10 years ago the decision was made to move into digital distribution and only the newest versions of *STARFIRE* were made available. Technology is making it possible to publish materials for a lower cost, over more types of media, and available to the entire world... so we've decided to make all of *STARFIRE*'s versions available while we continue to publish new versions and new materials.

Submissions and Support

The Starfire Design Studio provides support for our products and the opportunity for players to submit new material through our public forum at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/forum> or through email. Join the forum! Not only do we have player-led discussions, requests for games to join, and answer questions about the game; but we also provide news on future materials, ask for player input on concepts and ideas, and even information on the *STARFIRE* novels from David Weber, Steve White, and Charles Gannon.

Publisher's Information

STARFIRE is published by:

STARFIRE DESIGN STUDIO

218 Oakwood Dr

DeWitt, Michigan 48820-8303.

Ph: 517-230-1255

Dealer inquiries are welcome. All dealer and ordering requests to the SDS should be through email at orders@starfiredesign.com. The SDS can also be reached by phone or postal mail at the address above, but all correspondence by snail mail requires a stamped self-addressed envelope.

The following correspondence can also be sent to orders@starfiredesign.com: requests for spare parts prices, orders for spare parts (if available), product updates, and the replacement of defective or missing parts.

Designer's Information

Players should direct all comments, suggestions, submissions, and any expansion material for *STARFIRE* to the SDS by joining the Starfire Forum at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/forum>, or emailing cralis@starfiredesign.com or marvin@starfiredesign.com.

Snail Mail Inquiries

All correspondence through postal mail must include a stamped self-addressed envelope if you wish to receive an answer or evaluation of your submission. Your return envelope *must* bear enough postage to cover the return of your questions (about four pages to one first class stamp). Foreign customers should enclose three International Reply Coupons, not foreign stamps or money. It is imperative that you place your name and address on *every* page of your correspondence. Please do not put questions and expansion material on the same sheet.

When sending questions, phrase each one so that it can be answered with a yes or no, a brief answer, or by circling one of several choices. Leave several blank lines after each question (not each group of questions). Please attempt to look up the answer yourself first. We will cheerfully answer questions about how the rules work, but cannot answer questions as to "WHY?" various things work the way that they do.

Please allow 8-12 weeks turn-around on postal requests. Because of this limitation, it is far better to use email or the Starfire forum. In addition, the limitations above do not apply to those methods of support, and turn around can be as quick as several hours.

Design Credits

Game Design 1992 David M. Weber

1998 Revision by the Starfire Design Studio

Executive Editor	Marvin R Lamb
Original Game Design	Stephen V. Cole
Production	Marvin R Lamb
Marketing & Promotion	Marvin R Lamb and John Olsen
Cover Artist	David R Deitrick
Interior Artists	Jim McGonigle & Jackie Southerland
Countersheets	Leanna M. Cole & Stephen V. Cole

2012 Re-Release Credits

Composition	James Yanchak
Editors	Matthew Olson and Fred Burton
Cover Changes	Larry Robinson

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01.00 Overview of the Game System

New Players should read 01.05 first and especially 01.05.05.

01.01 Game Scale

01.01.01 Time Scale

STARFIRE is played on four-interfaced time scales: strategic, system, interception, and tactical scales, divided as follows (information in the same row is equivalent):

1 Strategic Turn	= 1 month	= 30 System Turns
1 System Turn	= 24 hours	= 48 Interception Turns
1 Interception Turn	= 30 minutes	= 60 Tactical Turns
1 Tactical Turn	= 30 seconds	

The strategic level is used primarily for interstellar movement, economic transactions, political negotiations, etc. Non-movement strategic activities are covered under the appropriate rules section in the strategic rules, as is interstellar movement.

The system level is used for movement within star systems when maneuvering units or groups of units well beyond weapon range.

The interception level is used to maneuver spacecraft from system level movement into combat range of one another and for planetary combat.

The tactical level is used to resolve ship-to-ship combat.

Each level of play above the tactical is divided into 6 pulses, each consisting of a varying number of complete turns at the next lower scale (see chart below).

01.01.02 How the Game Scales Interface (General)

The following explanation is general, intended only to set the groundwork for the rules needed to engage in combat within a given star system. See 03.00 for detailed rules on system, interception, and tactical movement. See 18.00 for detailed rules on strategic movement.

01.01.02.1 The Strategic Scale: Most campaign game decision-making and record-keeping activities are conducted at this level, as is interstellar movement, so long as spacecraft pass only through known systems without encountering hostile races or unknown spacecraft. When an unknown star system is entered or unknown spacecraft are encountered, play shifts to the system scale.

01.01.02.2 The System Scale: When the system level is triggered, events are frozen at the strategic level until all system-level events are resolved or for a minimum of 4 hours (1 system level pulse). After each system level pulse, players check their Fleet Movement Orders. If additional starships have arrived in the star system, they are placed on the appropriate warp point and play resumes at the system level unless

hostile units are close enough to the warp point to trigger the interception or tactical scales (see below).

01.01.02.3 The Interception Scale: This scale is triggered when spacecraft enter the same system hex as other spacecraft or planets. Time is frozen at the system level while 8 interception turns (4 hours or one system-level pulse) are played out. After every 8 interception turns, one more pulse is played at the system level, after which play resumes at the interception level.

Spacecraft moving from system scale to interception scale are placed in the middle interception hex of the system hex side through which they entered the system hex (see 01.04.02).

01.01.02.4 The Tactical Scale: Space-to-space combat can occur only if opposing forces close to within theoretical maximum weapons range, which is defined as 60 tactical hexes, or 15 light-seconds (the diameter of one interception hex), the maximum distance a light-speed beam or object can travel in one tactical turn.

Whenever more than one player's spacecraft enter the same interception hex, they are in theoretical weapons range and trigger the tactical level of play.

Time is frozen at the interception level for 10 tactical turns (5 minutes, or one interception-scale pulse) or until one force is destroyed or withdraws beyond 60 tactical hexes from its opponent. After every 10 tactical turns, one pulse is played at the interception level before play resumes at the tactical level.

Spacecraft moving simultaneously from the interception scale to the tactical scale in the same interception hex are normally placed in the middle tactical hex of the interception hex side through which they entered the tactical map. (Remember that each interception hex [see 01.04.01] represents the entire area of the tactical map.) If, however, units approach an interception hex containing other units which are already engaged in tactical movement and/or combat, the approaching units are placed in the center of the adjacent interception hex on their approach bearings using the extra tactical map halves provided (see 01.04.02).

If one player's units open the range beyond that of any weapon carried by his opponent's units and have the speed to prevent hostile units from reentering weapon range, but cannot open the range to greater than 60 tactical hexes, play still reverts to the interception scale. In this instance, both players' units move in the same interception hex until one player elects to break off and move into an interception hex not occupied by opposing units.

SCALE	DIAMETER OF HEX	TIME OF FULL MOVE AT THIS SCALE	NEXT LOWER SCALE	NUMBER OF LOWER SCALE TURNS IN 1 PULSE
Strategic	NA	30 days	System	5*
System	12 Light-Min	24 hours	Interception	8
Interception	15 Light-Sec	30 minutes	Tactical	10
Tactical	1/4 Light-Sec	30 seconds	None	NA

*Strategic Scale pulses are used to time movement and non-movement events. Movement at this scale is carried out as described in 18.00 in the strategic rules, and may use these pulses for movement purposes.

01.01.02.5 Putting it All Together: This means, for example, that after every 10 tactical turns, all units moving at the tactical level freeze in place while all units moving at the interception level move 1 pulse in the current interception turn. After 60 turns of tactical combat, all ships moving at the interception level will have completed six interception scale pulses (or one interception scale turn). After every eight interception scale turns (480 tactical level turns), all ships moving at the interception level will have completed one pulse of system level movement. All movement at the tactical and interception scales freezes while all units moving at the system level move 1 pulse in the current system scale turn and the Fleet Orders are checked for new arrivals moving on the strategic scale. After six system scale pulses (1,440 tactical turns, 48 interception turns), 1 complete system scale turn would have been completed. After 5 complete system scale turns (5 days), 1 pulse worth of strategic level movement would have been completed for political and economic transactions.

01.01.02.6 Multiple Resolutions at Lower Scales: It is possible for tactical engagements to rage in several different interception or system hexes simultaneously. When this occurs, players must prioritize the order in which engagements will be gamed out.

To do this absolutely correctly, players should game out 10 tactical turns (1 interception pulse) of the battle which began first; then freeze that battle and game out 10 tactical turns of the battle which began second; then game out 10 tactical hexes of the battle which began third, etc. If multiple engagements occur in the same system hex, this may prove necessary.

If, however, movement above the interception scale would be required for fresh participants to enter any other engagement, players should feel free to fight each engagement out to a conclusion in any order they prefer. *STARFIRE* battles rarely last longer than 480 tactical turns; thus, system-scale movement is usually not a factor.

01.01.02.7 Keeping Track of Time: Obviously, it is important to keep track of time when interfacing between levels of play.

Time keeping is necessary only to the extent required by play. That is, if no activities require resolution at less than the strategic scale, only the passage of complete days need be recorded. When events occur at lower scales, however, the players (or Space Master) must keep track at the requisite level.

When called for, as in strategic movement orders, time is noted in the following format:

DD/IntTurn:TacTurn:Impulse is an alternative players may choose. It represents game time better, but it is harder to translate into real time.

Example: 12/43:30:6 indicates the 12th day (system turn), 43rd interception turn, 30th tactical turn, and the 6th (last) pulse of that tactical turn.

01.02 Star Systems (General)

Star systems consist of stars, their system bodies, and any artificial space constructs that orbit them. A detailed description of system bodies and how they are generated and surveyed is contained in Strategic Rules 13.00 and 19.00.

01.03 Warp Points (Definition)

Warp points (abbreviated WP) are anomalies in space/time that allow starships to make instantaneous transits over interstellar distances. There are many sub-types of warp points (described under 13.06), but all are formed by the interaction of stellar gravity wells and share certain common traits:

1. Stars that are more massive generally have higher numbers of WP than less massive stars. “Nomad” warp points (warp points in deep space not associated with any star) do occur, but are uncommon and are seldom associated with more than one other warp point.
2. Only physical objects may pass through warp points without being destroyed by the gravitic stresses.
3. Objects that pass through a WP simultaneously can interpenetrate or “overlap” on their return to normal space, in which case, since no two objects can exist in the same space, they are destroyed by a spectacular explosion.
4. Warp points may be thought of as “gravity whirlpools” whose “grav surge” will destroy most small objects (such as missiles, fighters, etc.) Sensitive electronics on larger starships will also suffer temporary incapacitation or degradation, and the ships themselves will be thrown violently off course in transit. Once a warp point has been surveyed, starships may compensate for its surge patterns and emerge from the warp point on the heading of their choice; otherwise, their emergence headings will be randomized.

5. Warp points are very hard to detect, and some are, in fact, not detectable at all. Called “closed warp points,” they can be located only by units that have passed through them from the “open” warp point at the far end of the warp link.
6. Warp transits do not produce any readily detectable radiation. Units making transit can be detected only by other units in sensor range of the warp point used at the moment of transit.
7. Open warp points exert a minute gravitational attraction and will gradually “suck in” immobile objects. For this reason, no spacecraft (including satellites of any type) may be deployed in the same tactical hex as an open WP unless the spacecraft has a speed of at least one.

01.04 Game Maps

01.04.01 The Tactical Map

The tactical map is the playing surface on which combat is gamed out. Any map with hexes can be used and each hex represents an area approximately one quarter light second (46,500 miles or 75,000 kilometers) across.

Each hex is numbered for easy identification for scenario set up. In addition, the large numbers printed around the hex in the map’s lower left corner are referred to as the “scattergram”. The scattergram is used when the optional simultaneous written movement rules are used, to indicate the initial facings of units in some “historical” scenarios, and to determine the facing of any unit making transit through an unsurveyed warp point. Players can choose to make the scattergram go in any direction they choice as long as all player agree ahead of time.

Imperial Starfire contains an additional map to provide a larger tactical combat area and room to display entire star systems, as well as for movement above the tactical scale.

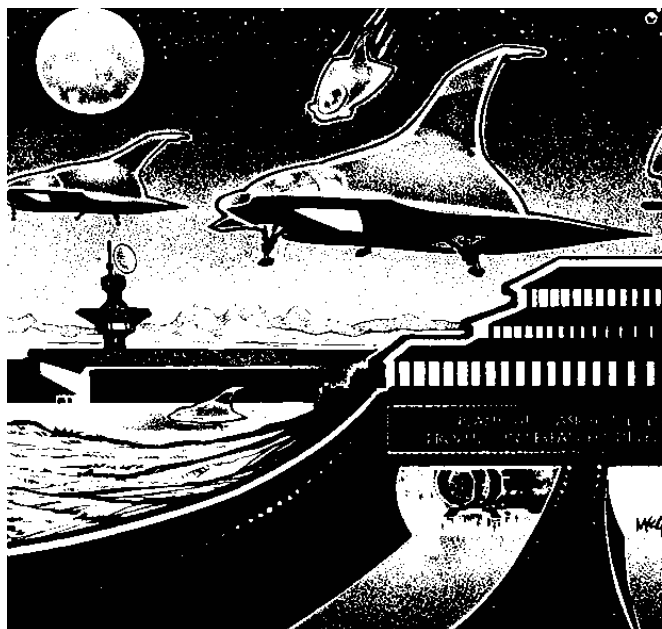
01.04.02 The Extra Map

There are no map edges in outer space, and players should acquire additional maps to extend the normal map in the appropriate direction(s) if combat spreads beyond its confines.

01.05 Terminology

The playing pieces for Starfire are the cardboard counters on the die-cut counter sheets. Some non-unit counters represent stars, planets, warp points, etc., and some are task force or fighter strike counters. For the most part, however, each counter represents an individual starship, fighter squadron, orbital base, space station, etc.

The silhouette on the counter and the letter code in the counter’s top left corner indicates each starship’s specific type. The number in the corner of the counter is used to identify individual units. The counters are color-coded by “historical” empire.



Empire	Counter Colors
Terran	Black-on-Blue
Orion	Black-on-Red
Ophiuchi	White-on-Black
Rigelian	Black-on-Green
Gorm	Black-on-Tan

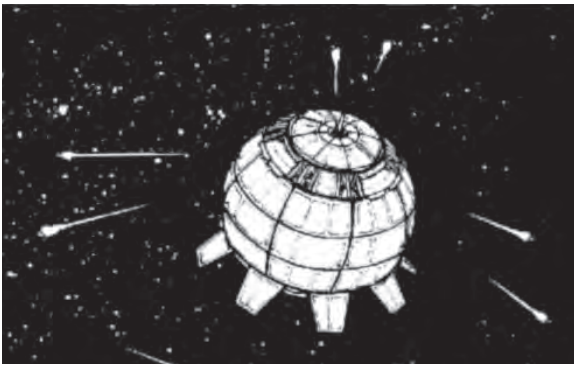
Counters with white backgrounds are “neutral” units, such as freighters, bases, SBM pods, courier drones, etc., and system bodies, such as stars, planets, moons, asteroids, etc.

01.05.01 Type Codes On Playing Pieces

Unit Type	Code	Unit Type	Code
Juggernaut	JG	Space Station	SS
Leviathan	LN	Base	BS
Super Monitor	SM	Freighter	FT
Heavy Monitor	HM	Assault Carrier	CVA
Monitor	MT	Battle Carrier	CVB
Light Monitor	SDH	Fleet Carrier	CV
Superdreadnought	SD	Light Carrier	CVL
Battleship	BB	Small Carrier	CVS
Battlecruiser	BC	Escort Carrier	CVE
Heavy Cruiser	CA	Fighter Squadron	F
Light Cruiser	CL	Gunboat	GB
Destroyer	DD	Pinnacle	pn
Frigate	FG	Assault Shuttle	ast
Corvette	CT	Shuttle	st
Escort	ES	Cutter	ct
Explorer	EX	SBMHAWK Pod	sbm

01.05.02 Spacecraft Terminology

Type is the information about a unit that is normally available to sensors. When referring to small spacecraft, each generation and type of unit is a separate “type” for sensor information purposes. That is, st, ast, pn, F1, F3, etc., are all separate types. The weapons these units carry are not revealed as part



of the type information. Fighters of different generations fall into one type per generation. Fighters are generally represented by a generic fighter (F) counter; however, if an opponent asks, and is at a range at which type and generation must be revealed, the owner must always give the exact fighter type information.

When referring to large units, “type” is the category of unit and, for Starships and bases, the size category it falls into (CA, CL, DD, FG, CV, CVL, FT4, FT5, BS1, BS2, etc). Note that Warships, Carriers, and Freighters are different types for the purpose of this definition.

Class refers to large units of the same type and design. A large unit’s class is not generally revealed by sensors, except by observation of the technology it uses, or a close scan with shields down (04.08) with a tractor attached.

Asteroid Forts (AF) are covered in 04.09.08, but are a type of large spacecraft, not a PDC, despite having some relationship to PDCs. They are built as spacecraft.

Bases (also called OWPs or “Orbital Weapon Platforms”) are space installations designed specifically for military use. Bases are not capable of warp transit but have station-keeping drives and need not orbit a specific system body. They may be placed at any point within a star system, relying on their station-keeping drives to maintain their positions, which suits them to cover warp points, although they may not be placed directly “on top of” an open WP.

Carriers are starships used to transport fighters or other starships. Warships and Freighters may also perform this function, but only Carriers have a hull specifically designed for such a mission.

Deep Space Buoys (DSB) are small, unmanned, immobile spacecraft built for a variety of purposes, such as sensor, sensor, communications, or weapons platforms. One special sub-category is Independently Deployed Energy Weapons (IDEW), which include DSB-L and IDEW-x.

Drones are small, unmanned units that are self-mobile and can carry or transmit information. Most are warp capable.

Freighters are commercial hulled Starships, generally used for transport missions.

Gunboat is a type of small craft. It is targeted differently from a small craft and has its own rule section in ISW4.

Large Spacecraft include Starships, Warships, Freighters, Carriers, Bases, Space Stations, and Asteroid Forts.

Large units are any large spacecraft, plus PDCs (see 04.02).

Planetary Defense Centers (PDC) are large units installed on planets, and operate in a manner similar to spacecraft (see 04.09).

Pods are small, unmanned units which are self-mobile, and usually warp capable, which can carry weapons. The SBMHAWK pod is one commonly used type.

Sleds are a specially designed small craft unit that can move as a missile, in order to land on and board a hostile spacecraft. See Crusade for details.

Small Craft are small auxiliary spacecraft. Some are unarmed, and while they are larger than fighters, they are always destroyed by a single point of damage. Like fighters, most Small Craft cannot make independent warp transits and must be carried through warp points aboard starships, but Pinnaces (the largest and most powerful small craft sub-type) have a limited warp capability.

Small Spacecraft include all units which aren’t Large Spacecraft or Vessels, and which are attacked under 04.03, using (usually) the 28.03 Fighter Kill Table. These include, at this time, Gunboats, Strikefighters, Small Craft, Drones, Pods, Deep Space Buoys (DSB), and Sleds.

Space Stations are extremely large installations orbiting specific natural system bodies within star systems. Space stations are normally placed in geosynchronous orbits and may contain shipyard facilities. They are bigger (and more fragile) than bases, but may contain military (armed) components. Their station-keeping drives are weaker than those of bases, being used mainly for attitude maintenance.

Starships include any large spacecraft that can have engines installed and is capable of making a warp transit on their own. They include Warships, Freighters, and Carriers.

Strikefighters (or, more often, simply “fighters”) are small, fast, lightly armed spacecraft. Fighters have limited endurance and are too fragile to survive warp transit on their own. They must be carried through warp points aboard Starships. (See Fighter Capabilities Table on the 28.00 Player Information tables.)

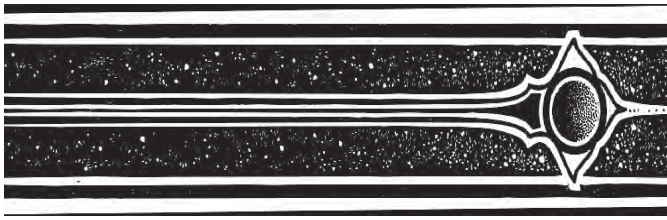
Vessels are Starships which use Tactical Engines (J) but are not capable of warp travel on their own, and thus are not technically starships. The term Vessel is more accurate for self-mobile large spacecraft, and is used in Alkelda Dawn. However, within the rules, “Vessel” and “Starship” are generally synonymous.

Warships are military hulled Starships, generally used for purely combat oriented missions.

Weapon Systems are systems, other than Dk#, that are capable of damaging a large unit.

01.05.03 Missile Type Designators

Missiles fall into two broad categories of operation, regular (long-range) and sprint mode. Each missile has a “body” or “basic” type that defines, in general, the size of the missile and its basic function (SM, CM, etc) and a warhead type (nuclear, laser, etc). Additionally, a missile may have a number of modifiers.



Missile modifiers fall into two categories, warhead modifiers and seeking/electronics modifiers. Some missile modifiers perform both functions; these are in the warhead modifier category. Some types of modifiers are incompatible with other modifier, warheads, or with certain types of missile bodies (especially smaller ones), and these restrictions are covered in the individual rules for the appropriate items. However, if not otherwise specified, all modifiers may be combined.

Warhead Types:

Missiles may mount only one type of warhead. The standard warhead is a nuclear fusion warhead, and uses no code. The codes a, b, L1, L2, and L3 are additional warhead types. Warhead sizes are based on the missile body type, with the base damage being equal to the damage done by a fusion warhead with no modifiers: size 1 for SM, size 2 for CM, etc. Warhead types other than fusion change the damage done by the missile. For example, a CM-b has a 3x damage multiplier for AAM, giving it a total damage of $2 \times 3 = 6$. Zero damage warheads are possible, and have no effect, but may be fired and intercepted by point defense normally.

Warhead Modifiers:

Warhead modifiers, such as “s” and “p1”, change the amount of damage caused by warhead type. All such damage modifiers (from both warhead type and warhead modifiers) are cumulative, and normal rounding of fractions (FRN) is applied to the result, unless otherwise specified in the appropriate warhead or modifier rules.

For example, a SM-b:s has a 3x damage multiplier for AAM that would be applied before rounding for $1 \times 3 \times 1.5 = 4.5$, rounds up to 5 points. A SBM-sp1 has a base damage of 2 points, a 50% damage increase (1.5x damage) for SCW, and a 10% damage reduction (0.9x damage) for AMP-1, with the final result rounded down (even though the SCW specifies rounding up, the AMP-1 rule specifies rounding down, and that this rounding down takes precedence over all other methods of rounding), for a total of 2 points of damage ($2 \times 1.5 \times 0.9 = 2.7$, rounded down).

Seeking/Electronics Modifiers:

Seeking and electronic modifiers change the way that a missile performs in combat, in ways other than the damage that it does (other modifiers may have effects similar to seeking/electronics modifiers, but any modifier that affects damage is considered a warhead modifier). Seeking and electronic modifier codes, such as HAWK and HARM, follow the warhead modifier code(s).

Missile Code Format:

Each missile is symbolized by a missile type designator in the form W-x:y:z, where W is the missile’s body type, “x” is the warhead type, “y” are the warhead modifiers, and “z” are any additional modifiers. A colon “:” separates the three types of missile modifiers. The various warhead types and modifiers are presented below:

- a:** AM = Antimatter warhead increases base damage to 2x (27.11.01).
- b:** AAM = Advanced Antimatter warhead increases base damage to 3x (27.13.01).
- L1:** LT1 = Laser Torpedo 1 warhead, changes base damage to 1/2x (FRD) as laser damage (27.09.08).
- L2:** LT2 = Laser Torpedo 2 warhead, changes base damage to 1x laser damage (27.12.12).
- L3:** LT3 = Laser Torpedo 3 warhead, changes base damage to 1.5x laser damage (FRD) (27.15.18).
- s:** SCW = Shaped Charge Weapon, increases damage 50% (round up), only usable on missiles of base size 2 or larger, nuclear or antimatter warhead only. (27.15.13).
- p1:** AMP1 = Advanced Missile Penetration Aid 1, reduces warhead strength to 90% (FRD). The AMP1 rounding always takes supercedes any other rounding. AMP1 can not be fitted to Laser Torpedo warheads. (27.15.02).
- h:** HK = HAWK seeking missile, regular fire mode only, starship launched anti-ship missiles only. (27.10.09).
- j:** HARM = ?2 seeking missile, regular fire mode only (27.14.21).

