

ROGUE STARS

SKIRMISH WARGAMING IN A SCIENCE FICTION UNDERWORLD



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Editor's Note

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THE BASICS

Equipment Needed
Rolling Dice
General Definitions

THE GAME

Pre-Game Sequence
Activating
Reacting
Actions and Reactions
Complex Tasks

RANGED COMBAT

Ranged Combat Results
Grenades

MELEE COMBAT

Melee Combat Results
Leaving Melee

DAMAGE

Hit Location
Damage Results

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Weapon Tables
Weapon Special Rules
Armour Table
Armour Special Rules

MORALE ROLLS

Results of Morale Rolls

4 MISSIONS

4 THE ENVIRONMENT

4 Terrain 36
6 Climbing 36
6 Noxious Atmosphere 36
Weather 37
7 Gravity 37
7 Interiors 37
8 Containers 39
8 NPCs 39

14 CREATING YOUR SQUAD

Themes 41
16 Tactical Disciplines 44
17 Designing Characters 45
17 Traits 47
Miscellaneous Equipment 52
18 Weapon Upgrades 54
21 Cybernetic Enhancements 56
21 Psionic Abilities 57
Character Design Summary 61

21 CAMPAIGN RULES

21 Who Survives? 62
Distributing Earned XP 62
24 Adding Traits 62
24 Wounds, Crippled Limbs, and Prosthetics 62
25 Adding and Replacing Equipment 62

28 SAMPLE CHARACTERS

28 200XP Squads 63
30 Characters 64

INTRODUCTION

In the furthest reaches of a collapsing galactic empire that once ruled a thousand different cultures and species, badly paid militias and undermanned police forces struggle to restore order. Their enemies: pirates, desperadoes, and high-tech low-lives from every corner of the galaxy. No colony, mining station, or trade route is safe. Chaos reigns, and only Fate will decree who will live, die, and prosper among the Rogue Stars.

Rogue Stars is designed for character-driven firefights in a far-future setting. The protagonists are pirates, cyborgs, bounty hunters, merchants, mercenaries, cultists, and other survivors from the fringes of the galaxy.

THE BASICS

Rogue Stars is designed for a small table (3x3') and a squad of 4–6 figures per player. Each figure represents an individual, and character generation is in the players' hands – a points system allows for the creation of any human, alien or robot. In addition to the characters' distinctive Traits and equipment, squads have unique Themes (who they are and why they fight) and Tactical Disciplines (how they fight).

The game uses an unusual activation system to represent the chaos of combat. A squad may try to retain the upper hand, but the more they exert themselves, the easier it is for their opponents to take the initiative.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- 4–6 figures per player.
- Enough scenery to set up a realistic battlefield.
- Three 20-sided dice.
- Markers (glass beads, poker chips) in three colours as Stress, Pin, and Wound counters (we use white, yellow, and red). About 10 Stress and 5 Pin and Wound markers are needed per squad.
- A tape measure marked in inches (centimetres if using 15mm figures) for movement and ranges.
- A few markers for uncommon conditions (Entangled, Hidden, Reloading, or Mind-controlled) may be handy.



Sample File



Optional: Increased Criticals

For more dramatic gameplay, count any roll that beats a TN by 10 or more as a critical success, and any roll that falls short by 10 or more as a critical failure.

Here's a summary of the use of markers:

Stress subtracts from Activation/Reaction rolls. Pins subtract from Morale and Shoot rolls and add to Melee rolls against the Pinned character.

Wounds subtract from Melee, Morale, Endure and Psi rolls.

All markers make it easier for your opponent to Take the Initiative. All markers on a character are removed if he goes OOA.

ROLLING DICE

Dice checks in the game require rolling a 20-sided die (d20) and either simply checking the result against a table, or against a Target Number (TN). If you roll the TN or better, the action is successful. If you roll less than the TN, the action fails. There are often situational modifiers that affect the result of rolls, but a natural, unmodified roll of 1 is a critical failure, while a natural, unmodified 20 is a critical success. The Target Numbers Table summarizes the TNs for common actions.

Action Attempted	Target Number
Activate	8
React, Spot, Quantum Leap, Terrain, Shoot, Melee, Throw Grenade, Endure, Tech	10
Blind Jump	15
Take the Initiative	16

Degree of Success Table	
Rolling 1	Critical Failure! The action fails and the character suffers a setback.
Rolling less than the TN	Failure! The action fails.
Rolling the TN or better	Success! The action is performed.
Rolling 20	Critical Success! The action succeeds spectacularly.

OTHER DICE

Sometimes the d20 is called upon to roll different number ranges. To model a d10, divide the d20 result by two. For a d5, divide by four, and for a d4, divide by five. Always round up any fractions.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

- **Active opponent:** A foe who is not Prone, Entangled, Mind-controlled, Panicking, or Out of Action.
- **Adjacent:** Two models are adjacent when they are in base-to-base contact.
- **Baseline:** A side of the table that works as a 'home' for one of the squads. The attacker's

baseline is the side of the tabletop from which his models enter play and the direction towards which they flee.

- **Deploying:** Placing figures in their starting position at the beginning of a game. In general, the defender deploys first, but mission rules might alter this.

- **Experience points (XP):** XP are used to build characters and to reward players for achieving mission objectives. The squad gaining most XP wins. In campaigns, XP are spent to increase abilities. As a rule of thumb, gain 3XP for each enemy defeated, and 5XP for each objective reached.

- **Facing:** There is no facing – figures can move, spot targets and fire in a 360° radius.

- **Line of Sight (LoS):** An uninterrupted line of sight must exist between a shooter and a target for a shot to be possible. When in doubt, draw a length of thread from shooter to target to check LoS.

- **OOA:** Out of Action. A character who has been knocked out and takes no more part in the game, but may be carried to safety by his comrades, looted by opponents, or eaten by ravenous aliens.



- **Random Hit Locations:** If a character is hit in a random location by accidental damage, roll d20. On a 1–9 = torso, 10–12 = arm, 13–15 = leg, 16–20 = head. Attacks use a different mechanic to determine hit location.
- **Re-rolls:** If a rule allows a die to be re-rolled, the result of the re-roll stands, even if worse than the original. No re-roll may be re-rolled.
- **Terrain:** Unless the mission says otherwise, a game is played on a 3x3' table with at least 6–10 scenic items, covering at least two thirds of the table. Hard and fast rules on terrain set-up are not possible – use what you have. Indoor missions may have corridors, chairs, computer consoles, lockers, crates, hatches, metal doors, power units, furniture, and those ubiquitous steam-venting pipes. Outdoor missions may have boulders, rocky outcrops, small buildings, parked/wrecked vehicles, lakes of noxious fluids, rivers of molten lava, cave entrances, growths of fungi or alien vegetation, and even huge crystals.

This is a shooting-heavy game – bug cover and keep your head low. Make sure there are many obstacles that allow for hiding or skulking towards objectives.

THE GAME

PRE-GAME SEQUENCE

INTELLIGENCE

Before each game, after squads have been determined, one character in each squad may perform a TN15 Tech roll. If successful, the opponent must reveal his squad's profiles before deployment.

THE INITIATIVE ROLL

Players first roll to determine whose squad has the initiative in the forthcoming game. Roll a d20 and add the appropriate modifiers, re-rolling ties.

Initiative Modifiers	
Squad leader's Leadership Trait	+1, +2 or +3
All squad members are Veteran	+1
All squad members are Elite or Heroes	+2
Squad has Blitzkrieg Tactical Discipline	+2

The player who rolls the highest has the initiative and is called the attacker. His figures will move first at the beginning of the game. The other player is the defender and sets up the table.

DETERMINE MISSION

The attacker rolls on the Mission table (p.32) to determine his goal. The defender has to stop him, and rolls on the Location (p.34) and Complications tables (p.35) to learn where the battle is fought, and what events affect it. Combine these three results through a narrative and common sense to define and develop the mission.



You can activate a character as many times as you want. The more Stress you accumulate, however, the easier it is for the opponent to steal your initiative.

For example, we have a squad of Miners as attackers and Star Cops as defenders. We roll an Abduction mission, a farm for the location, and a VIP as a complication. Here's how we tied it all together: *On the mining world of Phoinax III, distillation of hard liquors has been prohibited, causing unrest amongst the hard-drinking miners. A company representative, escorted by a small bodyguard of Rangers, is inspecting a farm rumoured to be producing alcohol. A group of angry miners plans to kidnap the company man while he is relatively lightly guarded, and use him as leverage in demanding a repeal of the law.* The narrative will help you fill in any grey areas. For example, large containers may be grain silos, and a piece of machinery may represent distilling equipment. A third player may act as a game master and come up with the narrative for the other players, but it is generally better if all participants contribute to the story.

ACTIVATING

ACTIVATING A CHARACTER

To act with a character you must activate him. The acting player selects a character and may choose whether to roll one, two, or three Activation dice (d20s) for that figure, adding the relevant modifiers. The TN for the Activation roll is 8.

Activation Modifiers	
Civilian	-4
Green	-2
Veteran	+1
Elite	+2
Hero	+3
Per Stress marker on the character	-1

So, for example, a Green character with 1 Stress needs an 11 or better to activate.

Every success entitles the character to perform one action from the actions list, or any action allowed by the mission. You may combine and order actions as you see fit, as long as you do not perform more actions than the successes you rolled. Do not declare what you are going to do until you perform the actions. Put 1 Stress marker on the character for each action performed. This is not per die rolled nor per available action – you may always choose to perform fewer actions than you have available in order to limit Stress. So, if you roll three dice and two are successful, you may choose to perform one action, and thus put only 1 Stress on the character.

Why shouldn't you always roll three dice? Because every failure you roll gives the opponent a Reaction die. The opponent uses those dice to make Reactions – actions that happen before yours, and that may be used to take the initiative away from you.

The acting player's turn does not end until the opponent takes the initiative away from him, or until the acting player decides to pass. It is theoretically possible, but very unlikely, that the same player retains initiative for a whole game.

You continue activating your characters until you decide to pass, even going back and forth between two characters, or even activating the same character multiple times. Remember to put 1 Stress on the character for every action performed. You may stop activating at any time, passing the initiative to your opponent. When you do so, remove all Stress from your characters (they are taking a breather). Be careful not to remove Pin or Wound markers.

ACTIVATION CRITICAL FAILURES AND SUCCESSES

If you roll a 1 on any Activation die, the opponent gets to react at +2 on that single Reaction roll. If you roll a 20 on an Activation die, you may cancel a Reaction caused by the same Activation, or immediately roll another Activation die. This 'free' Activation roll causes no Reactions if it fails. If the new roll is another 20, repeat this process.

REACTING

When the acting player attempts to activate a character and fails, the non-acting player may choose to use make Reactions with one or more of his characters, adding the relevant modifiers. The TN for a Reaction is 10.

Reaction Modifiers	
Civilian or Nonreactive	-4
Green	-2
Veteran	+1
Elite	+2
Hero	+3
Per Stress marker on the reacting character	-1
Opponent rolled an Activation Critical Failure	+2

Each success entitles the character to perform one Reaction. Reactions happen before any actions are performed by the activating figure. This represents a character taking advantage of the opponent's hesitation. **Put 1 Stress on any character who performs a Reaction.** Reactions are optional – to avoid Stress, you may use only some or none of the Reaction dice, and may allocate them all to a single character or split them up between multiple figures. Do not announce how you are going to use them besides selecting a figure and stating how many dice you are rolling for that figure. If you split them, make the first Reaction roll before allocating the remaining Reaction dice.

Example: Player A attempts to activate a Ranger with three dice, but fails with two. He wants to use his only action to Hide behind a boulder. Player B attempts to react using the two failed dice. One of his pirates rolls the two Reaction dice, and scores one success. The pirate uses his one successful Reaction to shoot at the Ranger before he moves behind the boulder. As Reactions occur before actions, no cover modifier is applied to the attack.

CRITICAL FAILURES ON REACTION ROLLS

If you roll a 1 on a Reaction roll, that character becomes a **Sitting Duck**. If it was **Hidden** it loses this status, and is also automatically **Spotted**. The first ranged attack performed against it is at +2. When a shot is fired at the character, or when it performs an action, automatically remove the **Sitting Duck** condition.

CRITICAL SUCCESSES ON REACTION ROLLS

On a roll a 20 on a Reaction roll, choose **one** option:

- That character gets an additional Reaction die.
- That Reaction causes no Stress.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE

The non-acting player may want to take the initiative from the acting player. This may happen in one of the following cases:

1. The non-acting player spends a Reaction to perform a TN16 Take the Initiative roll, adding his squad leader's Leadership Trait, and +1 for each Stress, Pin or Wound marker on the opponent's squad.
2. The non-acting player puts an enemy OOA. This gives him a free Take the Initiative attempt.
3. The non-acting player reaches a mission objective. This gives him a free Take the Initiative attempt;
4. The acting player decides to pass.

If a Take the Initiative roll succeeds, the non-acting player becomes the acting player, and begins activating his characters. All Stress is removed from his opponent's squad. If the roll fails, the attempt is unsuccessful and the acting player may remove one Pin or Stress marker from one of his characters.

A 'free' attempt is simply a Take the Initiative roll that does not require the expenditure of an action.

Players often pass when they have too much Stress. Losing the initiative removes all Stress, whether it is done voluntarily or otherwise.