

Starquestions

Questions, answers, and advice on STAR FRONTIERS® gaming

by Penny Petticord, Carl Smith, and Roger E. Moore

This column is the science-fiction equivalent of the "Sage Advice" section of DRAGON® Magazine; the information presented here is as accurate as can be found, and comes from TSR, Inc.'s game experts. Readers wishing to contribute questions or problems should send them to: Starquestions, Dragon Publishing, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Because of our workload, we cannot write back to everyone individually, but we'll answer your questions here.

We are also accepting questions on the GAMMA WORLD® and UNIVERSE™ role-playing games, and we may be able to answer questions on the older SPI science-fiction boardgames as well. Send all questions to the address listed above.

With POLYHEDRON™ Newszine's permission, we are reprinting some of the questions asked about the STAR FRONTIERS game in the "Dispel Confusion" column therein. Read and enjoy, and write to us soon!

General topics

Q: Who created the STAR FRONTIERS game?

A: The original rules were developed by Dave Cook and Lawrence Schick, between 1979 and 1981. The game was revised by Mike Gray, Allen Hammack, Harold Johnson, David C. Sutherland III, and Steve Winter, and edited by Steve Winter and Troy Denning.

Q: I understand that the STAR FRONTIERS game was rewritten before it was first published. Will the original rules developed for the game ever be published?

A: Currently, there are no plans to publish the original version of the STAR FRONTIERS game. Much of the material that was left out was felt to be too complex; playability was



emphasized in the final version over complete realism.

Q: How is the STAR FRONTIERS: Alpha Dawn game different from the STAR FRONTIERS game rules that were first published?

A: There is no difference between them. For various marketing reasons, the game's name was changed to distinguish between the two separate sections of the STAR FRONTIERS game rules printed thus far: the Alpha Dawn character generation and combat portion, and the Knight Hawks space combat rules.

Q: How can the STAR FRONTIERS game be combined with other role-playing games like the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game?

A: At present, there are no set conversion systems to change characters from one game system to the STAR FRONTIERS game, or vice versa. Such conversions will be printed as game variants in the future, if some reader submits such systems to Dragon Publishing.

Alien Races

Q: Can some of the new races described in the STAR FRONTIERS game modules, such as the Ul-mor, Kurabanda, and Enora from the Voltornus series, be used as player characters?

A: The full statistics and abilities of NPC races described in the various modules haven't been developed and playtested enough to see if they would fit within the game system as PCs. You can use them as PCs if you want, or even create new character races, but you'll run the same risk that players in fantasy games run when they use giants and dragons as PCs: it might be fun, but the PCs might be too powerful for the game to properly absorb. Careful game refereeing could offset this, of course.

Q: Can a Dralasite divide into two or three characters?

A: No; Dralasites are single creatures and can only divide themselves when giving birth, not at their whim. When they give birth, they produce baby Dralasites, not new player characters.

Q: How flat can a Dralasite make itself? Can it go under doors?

A: Dralasites can "squash" themselves as low as 10 cm high overall, but this will take them about an hour to

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accomplish. Few doorways have cracks under them that are this high; most would be only a couple of centimeters at most.

Q: Can a Dralasite move if it turns into a big, round ball with no arms or legs?

A: It could roll itself along, but no faster than at its walking speed unless going downhill (a dangerous situation!) It would also not be able to fight, since it couldn't hold or fire weapons.

Q: Can a Vrusk carry another character on its back?

A: It can, but it would be the same as if a human were carrying someone around. Vrusk are not adapted to serving as pack animals, and acting as such could give them serious back injuries and other medical problems.

Q: Can Humans, Vrusk, Yazirians, or Dralasites interbreed and have children?

A: No; the four races are genetically incompatible with one another, and not even advanced biological sciences could crossbreed them.

Q: Could someone use a genetically-altered "superman" character in the game, with heightened strength and other powers?

A: Setting aside the question of whether or not this is possible (and it is doubtful even in reality), such a super-character would throw the game balance out of alignment. Who would want a normal human if one could have a super-human? How would the other players in the game feel about this? The problems that such a character might create would more than offset the enjoyment the player using such a character might feel in running it. Of course, the game referee might use such altered characters as non-player characters (since NPCs are not necessarily bound by character restrictions), and such NPCs might be allied with or fight against the player characters.

Psionics

Q: Why weren't psionics included in the STAR FRONTIERS™ game rules?

A: This was a design decision. It was felt that psionics would not fit with the mechanics of the STAR FRONTIERS game system, so they were dropped from the rules. However, a psionics system for the STAR FRONTIERS game appeared in ARES™ Magazine, Special Edition #2 ("Frontiers of the Mind," by Jon Mattson), and may be worth a look.

Character skills

Q: The cost for gaining skill levels is unclear; how many experience points does it take to get from one level to another?

A: The listed point cost is as stated for every transition. It does not simply require 3 (or 4 or 5) more points each time a new level is gained; instead, it is a progression. For example, to go from level 1 to level 2 in the Military PSA costs 6 points. When the same character goes from level 2 to level 3, it will cost 9 points. To get to level 4 from level 3 costs 12 points, and so forth. The entire progression from levels 1 to 4 will then cost 27 XP.

Q: Could a new PSA, Jack-of-All-Trades, be created? If so, how would it work?

A: You could create such a PSA, though the game system already allows a character to learn many different skills. If you use such a PSA, it would be best to use the doubled Technological PSA Skill Costs for all skills the character wants to learn. Remember, this PSA has not been playtested and may need to be altered for game balance and playability once the campaign has gotten underway.

Equipment

Q: The Expanded Rulebook gives two different costs for the Standard Equipment Pack. Which is correct?

A: The 150 Cr cost given on the equipment list is correct; the 250 Cr cost given under Expanded Game Characters is incorrect.

Q: The rules say a gas mask fits over the wearer's face. How does this apply to Vrusk, who breathe through small nostrils in their undersides, or to Dralasites, who breathe through their skin?

A: The rules were written from a human point of view. A Vrusk gas mask is a harness arrangement that straps to the underside of the body. The filter is a thin sheet of plastic material that covers the nostril area.

The Dralasite gas mask is better called a gas suit; it completely covers the Dralasite. Again, a thin sheet of plastic material filters the harmful gases. Because this limits the amount of oxygen reaching the Dralasite, they may only wear these suits for a short period of time before they become too hot. The Dralasite gas "mask" may be worn with other defensive suits.

Q: On the Equipment List Tornadium D-19 masses 1 kilogram. Does this mean you

get 1 kilogram of the explosive for 50 credits?

A: No; Tornadium D-19 should cost 50 Cr for 50 grams. This should be corrected in the game rules. The 1 kilogram mass assumes that some of that mass is taken up by packing material, and also helps restrict the amount of explosive a character can carry around at one time.

Q: On the equipment lists, what are the masses of unmarked items like grenades? Why aren't they marked?

A: Unmarked items have masses of under .5 kg; they aren't listed individually because of the bother in having characters keep exacting track of every gram of equipment carried. A reasonable amount of such equipment may be carried about (20 grenades, for example) depending upon how difficult such items are to pack away and how many are taken. If *lots* of items are being taken, an overall mass may be assigned to them by the referee.

Vehicles

Q: How does one manage vehicle-mounted weapons in the game?

A: The note in the rules stating that vehicle mounted weapons are not covered refers only to fixed and heavy weapons, such as turrets, tank guns, ball-mounted machine guns and lasers, and missile launchers. If the referee allows it, characters may mount a machine gun or similar weapon on a simple ring or post mount on vehicles such as aircars and explorers. This would cost 150 Cr total. Glijets and hovercycles cannot be so mounted.

Mounting a weapon does not change any of the modifiers given in the Vehicle Combat section. The advantage of the mounting is that it allows use of heavier weapons while on a moving vehicle. One major drawback, of course, is that vehicle-mounted weapons are prohibited in built-up, civilized areas; characters driving such vehicles risk immediate arrest.

Modules

Q: What new modules will be coming out in the future?

A: Generally, TSR, Inc., avoids announcing lists of new products to be released, unless such items are almost ready for shipping. The best thing to do is to keep in close touch with your local hobby shop. They may receive a list of "coming attractions" that you can examine.