

Alternate Modes of Play

Battlestations is designed to be crewed by a group of friends working together against another player playing the role of the “enemy”. There are other ways to play, if you are so inclined as outlined below.

Semi-moderated

In this mode of play, one of the players takes on the role of the Enemy as normal but they also have a character in the crew. Obviously, they can't participate directly in efforts to problem solve about a mystery but they can take normal Battlestation actions and participate in strategy and planning. Players can take turns as the Enemy switching between campaign turns.

The advantage to this style of play is that everybody gets to be part of the crew. The “Enemy” player is restricted somewhat in their actions but some would say it is better than just having to be the bad guy.

Note: you could be the enemy in the First Contact game (you know the answer) and just not tell. You could actually play the hero Scientist asking yes/no questions to find the answer, you'd just have to defer to the rest of the crew to pose your questions.

PvP

This mode pits 2 crews against one another without a referee.

At the start of each round, one player from each side rolls 2 dice for initiative (luckable). The high roller acts as “heroes” for the phase. The other side acts when “enemies” act. If this die roll is tied, roll again.

Battlestations Unmoderated (Solo Play)

Here is a system that acts as an artificial intelligence to operate Enemy characters without needing an Enemy player. You can use it to play both solitaire and as a group.

Setup

Set up an Unmoderated mission as normal, but if you are playing entirely alone then you can have multiple Heroes. (Normally I never allow this, but when running the game solo it's the only way to have an effective crew other than being a bot specialist.)

Mission Difficulty

Unmoderated opponents won't make the best decisions possible, so increase the mission's MD by 1.

Secrets

If the mission contains secrets players aren't meant to know, one player must become the Oracle. The Oracle's job is to read the “Enemy's Eyes Only” section and only reveal information from it as they deem necessary during play. They'll have to carefully compartmentalize their Oracle role from their Hero role to avoid taking advantage of their forbidden knowledge.

In some missions, the only secret is the location of something. In that case you won't need an Oracle. Instead, the Science Bay's Research action can be used to randomly determine which half of a search area contains the location. For example, a mission objective is hidden on one of eight asteroids. The first successful Research will eliminate four of them, and the second will eliminate two more. One more Research, and you'll know where it is. (Just as in real life, it's always in the last place you look.) You can use a similar method for things that could be hidden in an area rather than a discrete set of objects, just split the area down the middle each time until you narrow it down to one hex or square.

Plot Twist Cards

Right before starting the first Round, draw the usual number of Plot Twist cards face-up. Play all “At Start of Mission” cards normally, then convert the remaining cards directly to Enemy luck.

Order of Action

Enemies aboard the Heroes' ship act first, then ones aboard their own ships.

If there is 3 or 4 OOC and Helm power, Enemy pilots will steady the ship first.

Otherwise act in the following order:

1. *Engineers*
2. *Scientists*
3. *Marines*
4. *Pilots*

Break in-profession ties on who goes first by location in the ship: furthest forward first, then furthest to port.

Behavior Overrides

Certain conditions will override the tactical doctrines. Check these first, in order, to see if they apply.

Victory:

If the Heroes will win the mission this Round and this Enemy character can do something which will directly prevent it, then do that.

Aggression:

Marines on the same ship as Heroes always select Personal Combat, as do Enemies of any profession on board the Hero ship.

Self-Defense:

If a Hero will be able to attack this character in personal combat next phase, select Personal Combat.

Chaotic Behavior

Enemies who run off the bottom of their action list will decide to do something "off-script" by rolling two dice on this chart:

ROLL	RESULT
2-3	Pilot
4	Marine
5	Science
6-8	Do Your Damn Job
9+	Personal Combat

Add 1 to the dice roll for Xeloxians or pirates, and +1 for Marines.

Enemies that roll "Do Your Damn Job" will go through the same flowchart they just fell off of, but this time increase all acceptable risk values by 2.

Enemies that run off the bottom of the new chaos-inspired chart just twiddle their thumbs (or equivalent manipulators) and take the Overwatch action to shoot the first reasonable target. Note that if no targets present themselves, they will just blast the floorboards of the ship if they are on the heroes' ship.

Strategy

The sole focus of Enemy strategy is to prevent the Heroes from meeting their mission objectives. Enemy casualties – even including losing the whole ship – are a minor concern, since they've got clones too.

If the Heroes need their ship intact to win:

the Enemy strategy will be *Assault*, and they will simply try to destroy the Heroes' ship. This includes missions where the Heroes must retrieve an object or data, and ones where they need to deliver something.

If the Heroes need to destroy something:

the Enemy will *Guard*. They will prioritize keeping their ship near the target and sniping at the Heroes' ship from range. If the target is destroyed, they will switch to *Assault*.

These strategies will affect Enemy *tactics*, as detailed on the next 2 pages.

Tactics

Risk Levels

A lot of the automated decisions the Enemy will make are based on their current risk level, which is sort of like Difficulty in reverse. To compute the risk level, subtract all of the additions you'd normally make to the skill check die roll from the action's difficulty. The simplest use of risk levels is to choose between actions.

Example: *An Enemy scientist with a skill of 3 is considering teleporting a Marine to the Heroes' ship at a range of 6; both ships have 1 power in their shields but the module has one used marker. The difficulty is 11 (6 base for Teleport, plus 2 for the shields, plus 3 for the used marker). There are 3 adds (for skill) and thus the risk level is 8. If the Enemy tactical doctrine specifies "Teleport on a 7-" then the scientist would consider their next option, as this is too risky.*

Risk levels are also used to select targets for actions that allow variable difficulty.

Example: *An Enemy engineer with a skill of 4 who prepared last turn is going to pump the engines remotely. The base risk level is 6, from 11 difficulty (8 base plus 3 for remote operation) minus 5 adds (4 skill and 1 for preparing). If doctrine says to go for 7- risk, the engineer would pump for one power. If it said 9-, then two power would be OK, as the risk level would be 9.*

Luck Use

Enemies will use luck for skill check rerolls that have a 50% or better chance of success.

Note also that enemies can only spend one luck per check. The exception to this is the hull check which each enemy can spend one luck on.

Example: *The engineer in the above example went for two power, but rolled a 5 and a 3. That's one short of the target, but rerolling the 3 will result in success if the die comes up 4, 5 or 6. So they burn a point from the Enemy luck pool and go for it. If the original roll was a 2 and a 3, a reroll would only succeed on a 6, so they'd save the luck instead.*

They'll also use luck when an incoming personal damage die is a 5 or 6. However, they won't do this if it won't help.

Example: *An enemy has 3 hit points left and a missile explosion just did a 6 and a 2 for damage. It's not worth rerolling the 6 – they're going down anyhow.*

Tactical Doctrines and General Behavior

Each profession has their own flowchart at the end of this section noting how they make tactical decisions. (Personal Combat is an exception, as it's not linked to a particular profession – everyone can get shot at equally regardless of their uniform color.)

These charts are in priority order; the Enemy will go down the chart and do the first thing that's allowed by risk level and circumstances. Enemies will move as necessary to enable an action; jet-equipped ones will jet-move to replace their longest stretch if they have a 7- risk to do so.

Example: *A Silicoid engineer is in its ship's far-starboard engine module wondering what to do. So it refers to the Engineering flowchart. It first checks the helm, which is undamaged. Then it checks the power levels, which are 1 helm, 2 guns, 1 shields. No bots are aboard, so it moves on to damaged modules – the adjacent engine is slagged. It decides to move into the module and attempt a repair.*

Enemies can look two phases into the future when making decisions. So if a directive says "repair damaged modules" and the closest one is within two phases of movement, the Enemy in question will start running toward the damaged module despite not being able to actually repair it this phase. However, they don't have memories, so don't bother to track what they were up to – just go through the flowchart again. Usually if circumstances haven't changed, they'll do the same thing anyway.

Example: *If the Science Bay had been broken instead, the engineer would still have run over to it intending to fix it next phase, and ending up just barely in the door. But if the Missile Bay had been broken, clear over on the other end of the ship, the engineer wouldn't even bother – it's too far away.*

Similarly, if an Enemy has movement left over after performing their action, they will run through the flowchart again to plan next phase's action and then move as appropriate in support of that.

Tactical Doctrine Flowcharts

Engineer

- ▶ If the helm is damaged, repair it. Take as many phases to get there as necessary – this breaks the usual “two phase” movement rule.
- ▶ If any power level is at zero, pump an engine at risk 7-.
 - ◆ Distribute the power to make levels even
 - ◆ For ties, prefer Helm, then Guns, then Shields
- ▶ If there are damaged Enemy bots, repair them.
- ▶ If there are damaged modules, repair them. If at an engine battlestation, pump it first at risk 7- and then go off to do the repairs.
- ▶ Operate Mine Layer to put a mine in path of the Heroes at risk 7-.

Science

- ▶ If there are inbound missiles, overwatch to ECM as many as possible at risk 7-.
- ▶ If there are wounded enemies – including broken bots – heal them in order of proximity starting with self.
- ▶ If there are no scans, get some at risk 7-.
- ▶ If there are scans, operate the Teleporter at risk 7-. Wait until the Marines have gone over before sending yourself.
- ▶ If there is a cloaking device, go on overwatch to raise the cloak level after enemy actions at risk 7-.

Personal Combat

- ▶ Attack the closest target. If more than one is equidistant, pick randomly.
- ▶ Move as close as possible to the closest target and go on overwatch to attack with a ranged weapon.
- ▶ If there are no targets aboard, teleport or boarding missile at risk 7- onto a ship that does.

Marine

- ▶ Fire the closest ship's weapon at risk level 7-.
 - ◆ Aim for the lowest-risk target. If tied, target in the following order: fighters, inbound missiles, Heroes' ship.
- ▶ Fire a ship's weapon remotely at risk 8- (same tiebreaker).
- ▶ If risk is 9+ but another enemy will be firing this phase then overwatch to assist them.
- ▶ If there is 1 or more Hero microships in flight, and the risk level to hit them is 10+, convert to multicannon.
- ▶ If the risk level to hit the Hero ship is 8+ due to range, convert to long range cannon.
- ▶ Switch to Personal Combat mode and board Hero ship at risk 7-. Recruit a Scientist if possible to act as combat medic and/or get the Teleporter risk into acceptable range.

Pilot

- ▶ If the Helm is damaged, repair it.
- ▶ If there is no Helm power, transfer one in (probably remotely).
- ▶ Maneuver the ship at a risk of 7-.
 - ◆ If the ship's course will intersect the Heroes' next phase, go on overwatch to ram.
 - ◆ If the OOC is greater than 2, steady the ship.
 - ◆ Accelerate to maximum safe speed (one that gives future maneuvers a 7- risk)
 - ◆ If on Guard, turn if necessary to stay within 6 hexes of the target.
 - ◆ If on Assault, turn to intercept the Heroes' ship, taking into account their current course.
- ▶ If another Enemy will be maneuvering the ship this phase, go on overwatch to assist.