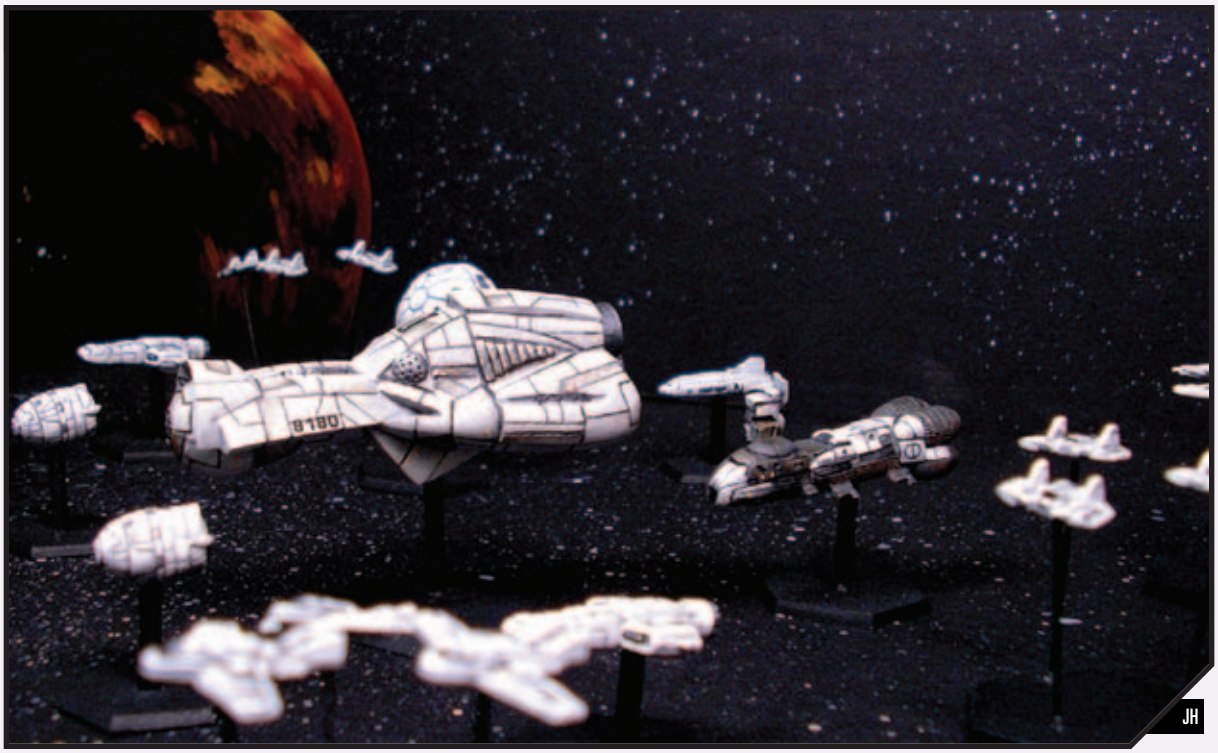
BATTLETECH™

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

• CATALYST GAME LABS •



A Word of Blake fleet, lead by the Black Lion*-class* Rays of Enlightenment*, moves to protect one of its Hidden Worlds: the Ruins of Gabriel.*

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To the Aerospace Cabal: Joel "Welshman" Bancroft-Connors, Jason Donahue, Térence "Weirdo/Zug" Harris, Mike Miller, Luke "Jellico" Robertson, and Christopher K. "Goose" Searls. I've tried hard to interact with the community over the years, taking their dedication and passion and using that to increase the quality of our products. The creation of the "Aerospace Cabal" and their work on *Strategic Operations* took that to a new level, as I directly tapped into players' expertise to "hopefully" fill in so many of the gaps left in aerospace rules across so many years. I believe I can finally say that this is the rules set aerospace fans have been waiting for.

Dedication

As this book is really volume two of *Tactical Operations*, I must again dedicate this book to my fantastic, all-too-forgiving wife. Again, please give Tara a giant round of thanks if you like these core rulebooks, as they wouldn't exist without her support.

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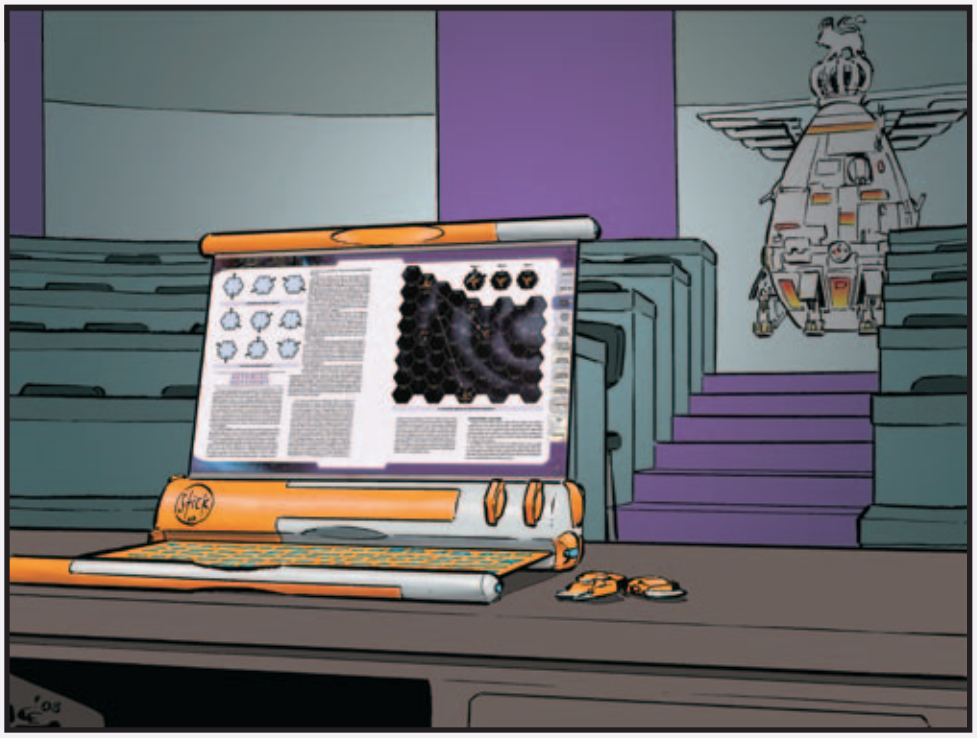


The *Total Warfare* (*TW*) and *TechManual* (*TM*) rulebooks present the core game and construction rules for *BattleTech* (*BT*), otherwise referred to as the standard rules. These two volumes encompass eight core unit types—several of which contain numerous sub-unit types—and a host of weapons and rules, as well as covering many different game situations. However, despite the breadth of play covered, many game situations still fall outside those rules, not to mention a plethora of more advanced equipment, as well as a few advanced units.

ADVANCED RULES

Beyond the standard rules, a legion of advanced rules exists, allowing players to expand their games in any direction they desire. In an effort to bring these rules to players in the most logical form possible, the advanced rules are contained in three "staging" core rulebooks, each one staging up and building off of the previous rules set. Additionally, each one focuses on a particular "in-universe time frame" that will allow players to easily grasp where a given rulebook will "plug into" their existing game play.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS

SitRep:
Forces on-world.
Conflict expected to last mere hours to achieve object.

BattleTech Tactical Operations (*TO*) is the first in the "staging" Advanced Rulebooks. Its focus is during game play, and applies directly to a game as it unfolds on a world in the *BattleTech* universe; its rules represent hours in-universe, the time frame it takes for a single, moderate-sized battle to play out on a gaming table.

Building on *Total Warfare* and *TechManual*, *Tactical Operations* conveys many advanced rules for movement and combat across various units, while expanding core rules such as those for buildings, and implementing a host of advanced terrain and weather rules. Rules for the construction and use of advanced Support Vehicles are presented, as well as advanced and prototype construction options and weapons for use by almost every unit.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

SitRep:
Forces in solar system.
Beginning burn to planet.
Conflict expected to last weeks to achieve object.

BattleTech Strategic Operations (*SO*) is the rulebook you hold in your hands and is the second "staging" Advanced Rulebook. It stages a player up to the next logical area of play, focusing on "in a solar system" and multi-game play; its rules represent weeks within the *BattleTech* universe, the time frame needed for several battles to conquer an entire solar system.

Strategic Operations contains advanced movement and combat operations emphasizing the importance of aerospace units, while extensive rules cover combat drops of numerous troop types into any situation. Linked scenarios and comprehensive maintenance, salvage, repair and customization rules provide an easy format for players to turn multiple games into an interconnected campaign to capture a target system, where the support crew of technicians and doctors and their skills can be just as important as any warrior. Complete game play and construction rules for advanced aerospace units are also included. Finally, a complete game system—*BattleForce*—allows players to use their existing miniatures and mapsheets to play quick, fast-paced *BattleTech* games, from small-scale skirmishes to large-scale planetary invasions.

This book contains a number of rules changes from previous editions. We feel confident that these are the most complete, clear and concise advanced rules for *BattleTech* ever presented.

These rules supersede all previously published rules, including the *BattleTech Manual*, *BattleTech Compendium*, *BattleTech Compendium: The Rules of Warfare*, *BattleTech Master Rules* (standard and revised editions), *Combat Operations, AeroTech (First, Second and revised editions)*, and *BattleForce* (First and Second editions).

To use the construction rules, designers will need paper and pencils, as well as copies of the Blank Record Sheets found at the back of this book. Due to the complexities involved with the construction of the Advanced Aerospace Units, a calculator will be handy as well.

INTERSTELLAR OPERATIONS

SitRep:
Forces marshaled.
Flotillas assigned to target solar systems.
Conflict expected to last months to achieve objects.

BattleTech Interstellar Operations (*IO*) is the third and final "staging" Advanced Rulebook. Players are staged up to the final level of play, where they can assume the roles of a House Lord or Clan Khan and dominate the galaxy; *IO* rules represent months in the *BattleTech* universe, the time frame for conquering numerous star systems.

Interstellar Operations contains complete rules for generating and running any type or size of force, as well as the *BattleTech Strategic Game: The Inner Sphere in Flames*. This comprehensive rules set governs the running of an entire faction's military as a player tries to conquer (or defend) numerous solar systems. More importantly, the Strategic Game contains rules that allow players to stage any portion of a given conflict back through the various rule sets, as they desire–from the simple, easy-to-use rules of conflict for the Strategic Game, down to *BattleForce*, or all the way back down to a standard *BattleTech* game as presented in *Total Warfare* and *Tactical Operations*. Players have complete flexibility for any type of conflict in which they wish to engage.

CHOOSE WHAT YOU LIKE

As previously noted, *Strategic Operations* encapsulates a myriad of advanced rules. In effect, all the rules and weapons/equipment in this volume are optional. This means you can use as many or as few of the rules in this book as you want. (In fact, this book contains so many new rules that we recommend you try them out a few at a time, rather than attempting to use them all at once.) Furthermore, most of the new rules and equipment here can be added individually to a standard game. You can add rules and pieces of equipment to your game one at a time—most of the rules do not rely on other rules in this book to work in existing *BattleTech* games. This allows you to tailor your *BattleTech* game to your taste by including only those rules that you find make the game more interesting or fun. Use whatever new rules and equipment you want and disregard the rest. Given the scope of the rules and the fact that they are optional, all players in a group should read through and agree to the use of any of these rules and weapons/equipment.

PLAYER ADJUDICATION

An advanced-rules book for any game is, almost by definition, more complex. In a game system with such a long and rich heritage as *BattleTech*—this rulebook alone draws from dozens of different sources across a large number of years—that complexity is even greater. Developers and writers have gone to great effort to make these rules as comprehensive as possible—not only from one section to the next in this book, but in how such advanced weapons and rules interact with the core game and construction rules as presented in *Total Warfare* and *TechManual*. However, the sheer scope of *Strategic Operations* (as with *Tactical Operation)* and the plethora of options provided means that it is not possible to cover all potential situations. Once this product reaches the players' hands, they'll envision scenarios and create situations on a game board that never crossed the minds of the developers or the legion of authors and playtesters that thoroughly worked over this product.

With that in mind, when players encounter situations not covered in the rules as they integrate the contents of *Strategic Operations* into their playing group, they are encouraged to adjudicate each situation appropriately; make up the rules that work for you. If in the process a playing group runs into an argument, feel free to let a die roll resolve any disputes so you can return to playing the game and having fun.

Finally, the forums on www.classicbattletech.com are an excellent resource. Players can tap into a strong and vibrant online community, tapping a wide selection of players for different ideas on how best to adjudicate a particular situation.

FICTION

As described in *Total Warfare* and *TechManual*, fiction plays a pivotal role in bringing the *BattleTech* universe to life. Whether "story fiction" that places readers inside the heads of the characters in that universe, or "sourcebook fiction" that places the reader in the universe as though living among those characters, both work hand-in-hand to immerse players in this vibrant milieu.

Total Warfare concentrated on story fiction, while *TechManual* concentrated on sourcebook fiction. *Strategic Operations* covers something of a middle ground, with various story and sourcebook fiction sections found throughout the book.

FICTION VS. RULES

It is important to remember that regardless of the critical role fiction plays in immersing players in the *BattleTech* universe, such fiction should never be construed as rules. As with *Total Warfare*, *TechManual* and *Tactical Operations,* to eliminate confusion about which sections are fiction and which are rules, the fiction sections have a unique look, compared to the uniform presentation of the various rules sections. All fiction sections are italicized in the table of contents.

FICTION VS. ART

Strategic Operations follows the graphic design format established by *Total Warfare*, *TechManual* and *Tactical Operations,* wedding art to the book's visual presentation in order

to enhance the players' experience. In this case, the graphic presentation represents a computer from House Marik's Lloyd Marik-Stanley Aerospace School, one of the Inner Sphere's largest and most advanced universities for the teaching of all aspects of aerospace travel, piloting and combat.

As with fiction, while art plays an important role in bringing the *BattleTech* universe to life, it should never be construed as rules.

COMPONENTS

Page 26 of *Total Warfare* (as well as p. 13 of *TM*) discusses several units that exist in the *BattleTech* universe, but fall outside the purview of the standard-rules game and construction rulebooks. Those units are discussed here.

JUMPSHIPS

JumpShips provide the only means of transportation between the far-flung star systems of the Inner Sphere, the Periphery and beyond. These vessels make interstellar leaps of 30 light-years at a time by harnessing the radiant energy of the stars with their huge solar-energy sails and Kearny-Fuchida hyperdrive technology. JumpShips are primarily used to transport DropShips between star systems.

WARSHIPS

Heavily armored, massively armed and highly mobile, the military JumpShips known as WarShips generally have the firepower to destroy even an assault DropShip with a single volley. They usually need only fear another WarShip.

As with DropShips, their myriad sizes and designs create two types of categories, both based on size, though their intended role comes into play in the second type of categorization. The first category type is simple demarcation between small and large, as explained below. The second type of classification combines size and role, though the wild variations in size and use of WarShips means that some vessels fall outside the categories shown below:

Raider: 100,000 to 150,000 tons
Corvette: 150,000 to 250,000 tons
Destroyer: 250,000 to 550,000 tons
Frigate: 500,000 to 750,000 tons
Light Cruiser: 600,000 to 725,000 tons
Cruiser: 700,000, to 800,000 tons
Heavy Cruiser: 800,000 to 1,000,000 tons
Battle Cruiser: 750,000 to 1,400,000 tons
Battleship: 1,000,000 to 2,500,000 tons
Surveillance, Transport and Carriers: No weight restrictions

Small WarShips

Small WarShips weigh less than 750,000 tons. These armed and armored JumpShips normally serve as escorts, providing protection for JumpShips and DropShip fleets. Many commanders also employ them as strategic assets, allowing them to accompany DropShips all the way to the destination planet. Upon arrival, they establish a geosynchronous orbit that allows them to react either to enemy troop movement on the ground with tactical orbital bombardments or to the threat of incoming reinforcements.

Large WarShips

Large WarShips range in weight from 750,000 to a mammoth 2,500,000 tons. Employed almost exclusively as protection for JumpShip fleets, a large WarShip rarely uses its massive destructive firepower against ground targets. Because of their sheer size and firepower, most large WarShips need only fear another large WarShip.

SPACE STATIONS

Numerous orbital facilities, colloquially known as Space Stations, serve multiple functions throughout the Inner Sphere. From factories to habitats, shipyards to system-defense stations, all of these facilities fall into one of three broad groups: low-orbit, geosynchronous or stable-point stations.

JumpShip

Small WarShip

Large WarShip

Space Station

RECORD SHEETS

Players use the following record sheets to track various types of information while playing *BattleTech*. Each type of unit (JumpShips, WarShips, and Space Stations) uses a unique record sheet. Blank Record Sheets are provided at the back of this rulebook for all unit types. How they work, and which record sheets should be used for each unit type featured in this book, are outlined below.

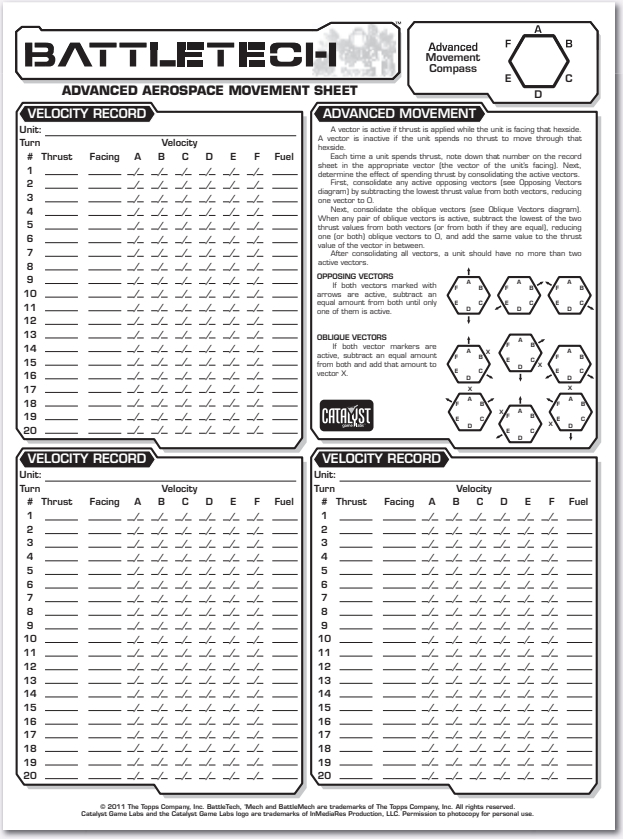
Construction

As noted in *TechManual*, at the end of the design process for any construction rules presented in this volume, each designer must translate his or her unit from its raw statistics to an appropriate record sheet in order to use it properly in a game of *BattleTech*.

AEROSPACE RECORD SHEETS

Based on unit type, the three aerospace unit record sheets have a different appearance, but use the same overall layout and core components. These record sheets are: JumpShip, WarShip, and Space Station.

Advanced Aerospace Movement Sheet: The Advanced Aerospace Movement Sheet is not a specific unit record sheet, but instead can be used in conjunction with any other aerospace record sheet either from this rulebook or *TechManual*, allowing players to easily track advanced vector movement rules (see *Advanced Movement*, p. 64).


BATTLETECH

ADVANCED AEROSPACE MOVEMENT SHEET

Advanced Movement Compass

VELOCITY RECORD

Unit:

Turn | Velocity

| Thrust | Facing | A | B | C | D | E | F | Fuel

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

ADVANCED MOVEMENT

A vector is active if thrust is applied while the unit is facing that hexside. A vector is inactive if the unit spends no thrust to move through that hexside.

Each time a unit spends thrust, note down that number on the record sheet in the appropriate vector (the vector of the unit's facing). Next, determine the effect of spending thrust by consolidating the active vectors.

First, consolidate any active opposing vectors (see Opposing Vectors diagram) by subtracting the lowest thrust value from both vectors, reducing one vector to 0.

Next, consolidate the oblique vectors (see Oblique Vectors diagram). When any pair of oblique vectors is active, subtract the lowest of the two thrust values from both vectors (or from both if they are equal), reducing one (or both) oblique vectors to 0, and add the same value to the thrust value of the vector in between.

After consolidating all vectors, a unit should have no more than two active vectors.

OPPOSING VECTORS

If both vectors marked with arrows are active, subtract an equal amount from both until only one of them is active.

OBLIQUE VECTORS

If both vector markers are active, subtract an equal amount from both and add that amount to vector X.

CATALYST

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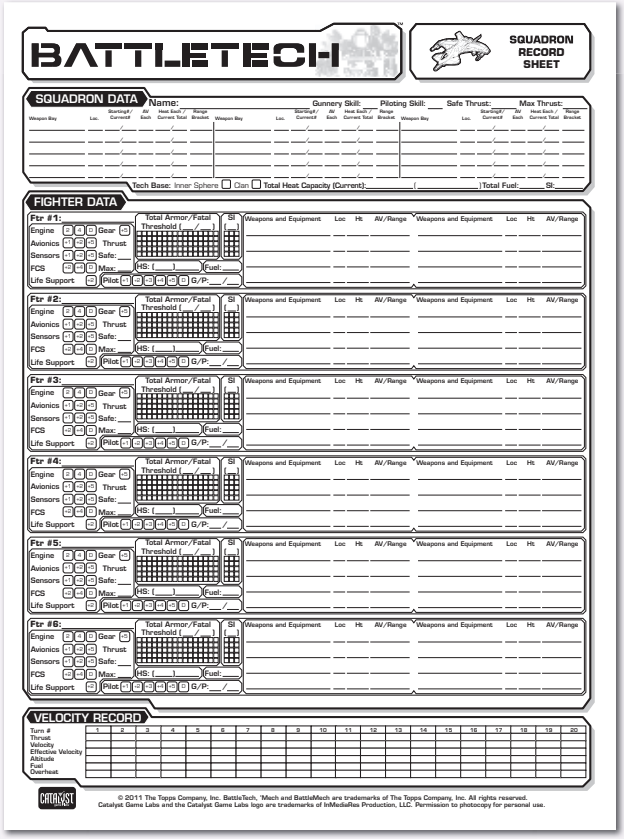
MM

Clan Ghost Bear and Clan Nova Cat engage in a fierce naval battle in the Alshain system.

Fighter Squadron Record Sheet: The Fighter Squadron Record Sheet doesn't represent a new unit type so much as a new unit formation and a way to track those details. However, most of the information on that sheet follows the same data blocks as outlined below (for more information, see *Fighter Squadrons*, p. 27).

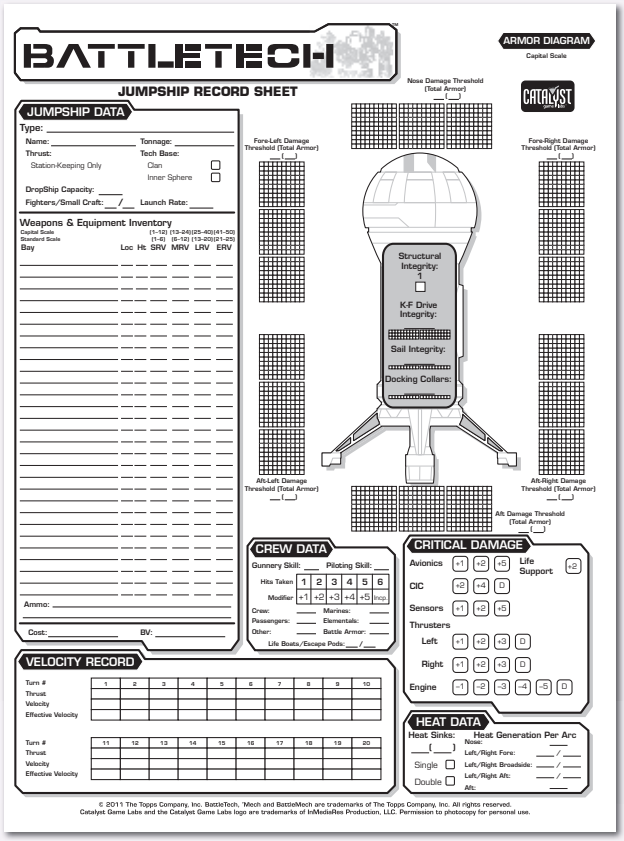


Unit Data

The Unit Data block for aerospace units varies by name with the unit type (JumpShip Data for JumpShips, WarShip Data for WarShips and so forth). Located in the upper left corner, this section of the record sheet lists the unit's most important statistics, including its model (Type), weight (Tonnage), Thrust Points (Safe, Max or Station Keeping), Weapons Inventory, Cost and Battle Value. JumpShips, WarShips and Space Stations, which can possess fighter and other unit bays, may note their complement of such units, followed by the number of functioning doors on the vessel capable of releasing these units during game play.

In the Weapons Inventory, weapons of identical types and location may be combined on a single line to conserve space. Unlike 'Mechs and vehicles, however, multiple weapons in the same firing arc (or the same bay, for DropShips) must note their total combined heat and Damage Values at each range bracket, as these units generally fire their weapons by arc or bay. Unlike other units, aerospace units do not list weapon ranges in hexes, but rather list the damage their weapons can deliver at each range bracket (with a value of 0 or a dash for any bracket beyond the weapon's range). Ammunition is noted on a separate line; designers can track such munitions there or in the Notes block.

Aerospace units that have access to capital missile weapons should list damage in standard- and capital-scale. To translate standard-scale damage into capital-scale damage, divide the Damage Value for the weapon in standard scale by 10 and round normally. When listing Damage Values, the appropriate format is to list the capital value first, followed by the standard damage in parentheses.



Pilot/Crew Data

This block lists the name, skills and condition of the unit's pilot or crew.

Critical Damage

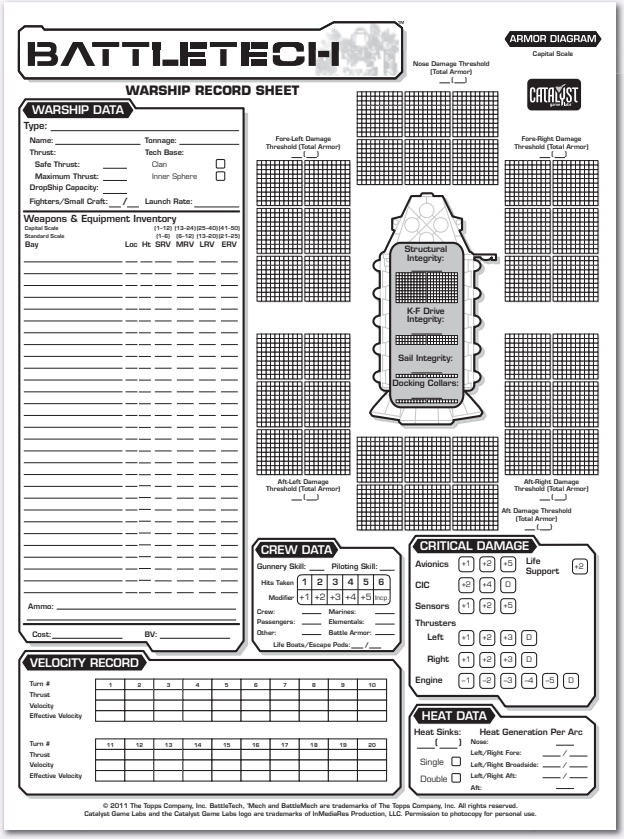
All aerospace units include a block for tracking possible effects of critical damage. The equivalent of a Critical Hits Table, this section is pre-generated, and varies only slightly by unit type.

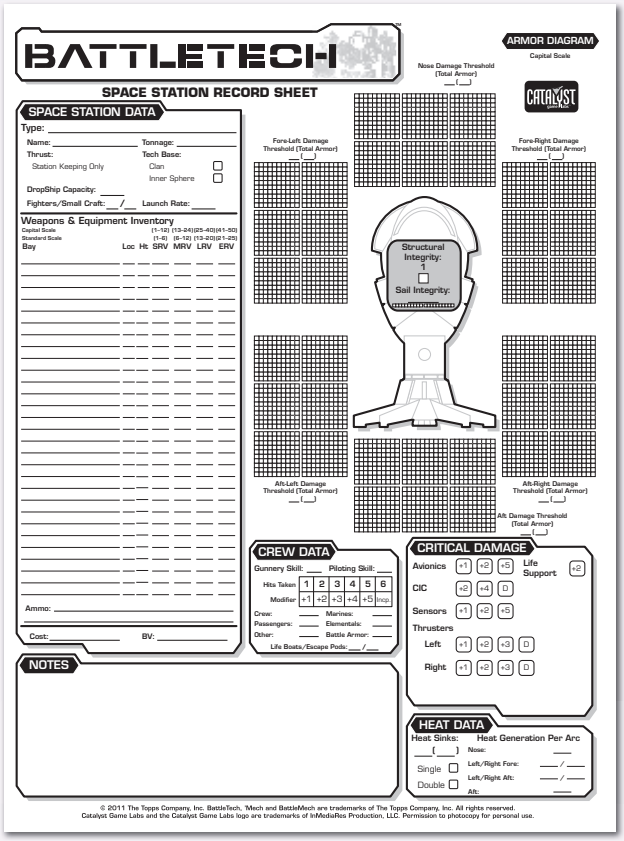
Armor Diagram

The Armor Diagram for aerospace units fills most of the right-hand side of the unit's record sheet. It outlines each of the main body locations found on the unit, and surrounds a single area shaded in gray that represents the unit's structural integrity.

When finalizing the design of an aerospace unit, the designer must black out all excess armor and structural integrity circles/squares by location.

Capital-Scale Armor: JumpShips, WarShips and Space Stations track armor using capital scale (10 x standard-scale). To help differentiate capital-scale from standard-scale armor tracking on other aerospace units, these record sheets use squares for each armor point in place of circles.





Heat Scale

JumpShips, WarShips, and Space Stations, which operate on a zero-net-heat principle, do not use a Heat Scale, nor do they track the number of sinks on the ship using circles. Instead, these units list the number of heat sinks, checking off their type (single or double) and their heat capacity in parentheses. These units also must note the total number of heat points for each arc's worth of weapons fire. Remember that such units may not fire an arc if doing so would exceed the unit's heat sink capacity.

Velocity Record

Only found on JumpShip and WarShip record sheets, this block provides space to record the unit's current velocity during game play.

ADDITIONAL RECORD SHEETS AND TEMPLATES

The following additional record sheets are also found at the end of this rulebook, but are described elsewhere in this volume.

Radar Map

This template is used in conjunction with the Abstract Aerospace System (see p. 18).

High Speed Closing Engagements Sheet

This record sheet is used in conjunction with the High Speed Closing Engagements rules (see p. 74).

BattleForce Record Sheets

The various BattleForce Record Sheets are for use with either the *BattleForce: Standard Rules* or *BattleForce: Advanced Rules* rules set; the specifics of those record sheets are discussed in those sections (see, pp. 212 and 260, respectively).

Miniatures Rules Templates

These templates are for use with the table-top miniatures conversion rules (see *Miniatures Rules*, p. 386).

Unit Maintenance Worksheet

This worksheet is for use with the Maintenance, Repair, Salvage and Customization rules (see p. 166).