

TRAVELLER

Core Rulebook

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TRAVELLER

Traveller is a science fiction roleplaying game of the far future. Humanity has gone to the stars and found them crowded with other forms of life and other sentient races, and science and technology have advanced vastly over the present day – but the essential nature of humanity is unchanged. Life continues as it does today, only spread out over the sea of stars. A mighty Imperium unites thousands of star systems under a single rule, but it is beset by enemies both internal and external.

The Imperium commands the space between the stars, ensuring that civilisation endures and trade continues. Megacorporations and feudal lords conduct the bulk of this trade, but there will always be a place for the free trader – hardy travellers and adventurers on the fringes of known space, dealing in strange goods and smuggled cargoes, doing whatever they can to make a credit.

While the *Traveller* rules can be used to model almost any science fiction novel, movie or setting, the traditional setting for games is the Third Imperium of Mankind, the third great empire to stretch across the stars. In the Third Imperium setting, the players take on the roles of tramp merchants and mercenaries, wandering the galaxy in search of profit and adventure.

Players

Most of the participants in a *Traveller* game will be **players**. Usually each player generates a character using the Character Creation rules; that character becomes the player's avatar in the game world. These player characters are the central protagonists of the game and scenarios revolve around their adventures and actions.

The Referee

One of the participants is the **Referee**, who describes the world around the characters, presents them with challenges and dangers, and takes on the role of the supporting cast and the antagonists. The Referee creates the basic outline of the scenarios that the player characters encounter and resolves the results of their actions using the rules in this book as a guideline.

Games

Traveller may be played in any of three basic configurations – scenario, refereed campaign, or shared campaign.

In a scenario, the players embark on a journey or adventure overseen by a Referee. The Referee determines what dangers the characters will face, from hostile aliens or criminals to solar flares or automated defence systems, or even political intrigue and deception. The players choose how their characters will react and overcome these obstacles. For example, the characters may be hired to bring a cargo from one world to another, but a rival merchant is trying to stop them and has hired a band of mercenaries to attack the characters' ship en route. The characters have to get the cargo through safely.

A scenario can be a one-off game, using characters written by the Referee specifically for that game and discarded afterwards, or it can be part of a campaign. A scenario takes one or more game sessions to complete.

A campaign is a series of scenarios, charting the continuing adventures of a group of player characters. A campaign can be continuous or episodic. In a continuous campaign, each scenario follows on almost immediately from the end of the last one and the fuel, resources and money available to the characters is carefully tracked. In an episodic game, there are longer gaps between scenarios, and the game focuses only on the exciting and conflict-filled parts of the characters' lives.

A campaign can also be refereed or shared. In a refereed campaign, there is a single Referee for the whole game, who sets up the whole universe that the player characters adventure in. Refereed campaigns can have long story arcs and ongoing plotlines, taking multiple scenarios to resolve. In a shared campaign, the position of Referee rotates from player to player – for example, when the character's ship jumps to a new star system, a different player takes over as Referee and presents the dangers and opportunities in this new system.

Campaign Ideas

A few suggestions to get the ball rolling:

The Trader Campaign: The player characters form the crew of a free trader merchant vessel, taking whatever cargos they can get to keep their spacecraft aloft and in one piece. Inspiration for games like this could be the TV series *Firefly* or the computer games *Elite*, *Privateer*, or *X*.

The Military Campaign: The player characters are all members of a military unit, usually veterans of the same career (see page 8 for more on careers). They participate in campaigns, skirmishes and other military activity. Inspiration could come from the *Honor Harrington* novels, the film *Aliens*, or *Starship Troopers* – the book, the animated series or the film.

The Explorer Campaign: In a game of this type the player characters go beyond the borders of known space, looking for objects, planets and civilisations of value or curiosity. The characters will have to be highly self-sufficient to survive away from known space for long stretches. For inspiration look no further than the original series of *Star Trek*.

The Traveller Campaign: The traditional *Traveller* campaign features a little of everything. The characters will go from exploring abandoned alien ziggurats to rescuing missing pets to taking on the local crime lord in a protracted gang war. Inspiration could come from anywhere.

Die Roll Conventions

The *Traveller* system uses two six-sided dice to resolve most actions. Some situations involve fewer or more dice. Accordingly, a quick discussion of various terminology and conventions is needed before proceeding.

1d6/2d6: To avoid writing 'roll two six-sided dice and add them together' over and over again, *Traveller* uses the abbreviation 'roll 2d6'. Where you see 'roll 2d6' read 'roll two six-sided dice and add them together'. Sometimes you may also see '1d6', '3d6' or other numbers of 'd6'. This simply means roll one six-sided die, three six-sided dice, or however many six-sided dice are indicated, and add them together to gain the final result.

d66: This is shorthand for a special way of rolling two six-sided dice. Before rolling nominate one die as the 'tens' die and one as the 'units' die, to give you a two-digit number between 11 and 66. Some numbers cannot be rolled on a d66, giving you a total of 36 possible outcomes.

Check (or Throw): To determine if a character succeeds or fails at a particular task, the player must make a check. To make a check, the player rolls 2d6 and adds any appropriate Dice Modifiers (such as a skill his character possesses, or a bonus from a piece of equipment). If the total is equal to or greater than the target number for that check, he succeeds. A check will usually have a skill or characteristic associated with it. For example, a check of 'Dex 8+' means 'roll 2d6, add your Dexterity Characteristic Modifier, and you succeed if you have a total result of 8 or more'.

Target Numbers: In many checks, the player needs to roll equal to or above a specific number (usually, eight or more). This is denoted by a number followed by a plus, such as 8+ or 10+.

Natural 2/Natural 12: Some rolls refer to a 'natural' number – this is the actual number rolled on the dice before any modifiers are applied.

Dice Modifier (abbreviated to DM): A number to be applied to a die roll before it is used. Dice Modifiers are preceded by a sign, which indicates if the number is to be added to or subtracted from the roll. For example, a Dice Modifier of -2 indicates that two is to be subtracted from the roll; a Die Modifier of +4 indicates that four is to be added to the roll.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Three players (Chris, Tom, and Claire) are playing *Traveller*. Their characters are, respectively: Morn, a thuggish ex-barbarian; Erik, a spy and agent, and Kathya, a pilot and technician. They're currently aboard their ship, a Free Trader. In-character speech is denoted by (parentheses).

Referee: Anyway, you've just jumped to the Cogli system. You're about two million kilometres out –

Chris (Morn): 'Accurate' as usual, Kathya! Only twice as far away as

we should be.

Claire (Kathya): The longer it takes us to get to the starport, the longer it is before you get us into trouble.

Referee: Ahem. As I was saying, you're about two million k out, and you're picking up a distress call.

Tom: My character will put the distress call on the screen.

Referee: It's audio only. 'This is Free Trader *Beowulf*, calling anyone... mayday, mayday, we are under attack... main drive is gone... turret number one not responding ... mayday...'

Claire: How close is the *Beowulf*?

Referee: No navigational transponder showing... give me a Sensors check, please.

Claire: I rolled a 9, plus Dice Modifiers gives me a 12.

Referee: You're picking up one ship about 80,000k away. Minimal heat, no power, looks dead in space.

Tom: No power? Then where's the transmission coming from?

Referee: Er, minimal power then. Power plant's down. The distress call continues 'Mayday... losing cabin pressure fast...calling anyone... please help...', then starts repeating itself.

Claire: Life signs?

Referee: Not at this range.

Claire: But I rolled a 12...

Tom: Any sign of the attackers?

Referee: Nope.

Tom (Erik): Something isn't right here. Either the *Beowulf* was hit a long time ago, in which case someone else should have checked out the call before us, 'cos we're not that far from the planet... or she was only hit a short time ago, and the attacker's still nearby. Nothing on the scope at all?

Referee: You're in open space. Unless they're hiding behind a speck of space dust...

Claire (Kathya): Nothing. They could have really good stealth technology.

Chris: Or be hiding on the wreck of the *Beowulf*...

Tom: If it was an internal problem like hijackers, he wouldn't have mentioned the turret being hit.

Tom (Erik): We've still got to investigate. There could be survivors. Morn, get to the turret and power up the guns. Kathya, bring us in. I'll get my vacc suit on and get ready to board.

Referee: As you approach the ship, you see the unmistakable scars of laser hits, er, scarring the hull. One of the airlocks has been blown open.

Tom (Erik): Looks like she's been boarded. I'll jump across. Don't dock – if there are bad guys still over there, then the last thing we want is them walking on board our ship.

Claire: Life signs?

Referee: Faint traces of three. Could be three people in low berth freezer-tubes, or three people in hibernation...or three recently-deceased corpses that're still cooling. Tom, you go through the front airlock and push off, drifting for several seconds before bouncing off the hull of the other ship. Your magnetic boots catch on, and you can walk over the skin of the ship towards the airlock, gingerly stepping over the areas melted by the lasers.

Tom: Do I need a Vacc Suit check or a Zero-G check or anything?

Referee: Er...do you have both skills?

Tom: Well, Zero-G level zero, so *technically* yes.
Referee: Nah, you don't need a check. You make it across fine.
Tom: We'll keep communications channels open, and I'll feed my suit's cameras back to the others so they can see what I see.
Referee: Sure. Are you going into the airlock?
Chris (Morn): *bzzt* I'll cover you with the laser turret.
Tom: Where 'cover' is a synonym for 'burn me to a crisp if you fire that thing anywhere near me when I'm only wearing a vacc suit. It's like covering me with a nuclear missile.
Chris: I'd call that pretty damn covered.
Referee: You step through the airlock, into the darkened corridors of the *Beowulf*. Air's gone...no artificial gravity... The beam from your suit's torch cuts through the air, illuminating droplets of blood floating like little worlds. Give me a Recon roll, please.
Tom: Rolled a...6. Failed, unless it's an unusually easy one.
Referee: It's not. The cargo bay's splattered with blood, but all the cargo appears to still be intact, although it's hard to tell with all the crates drifting around. It looks like the upper deck might still have pressure – the stairwells automatically iris shut if this lower deck is breached.
Tom: I'll go up and knock, I guess.
Referee: You tap your gauntlet against the metal... and there's an answering knock from above. You catch a glimpse of some movement behind you... and suddenly, the sensor feed from Erik's suit goes out!
Claire (Kathya): Erik! Can you read me? Erik! Erik? Erik?

TECHNOLOGY LEVELS

The concept of Technology Levels (TLs) runs through *Traveller*. Technology Levels measure the scientific capacity of a world and the complexity and effectiveness of a piece of equipment. The Technology Level scale starts at 0; the Imperium's most advanced scientists are probing the upper boundaries of TL 15, but most core worlds range between 10 and 13. Out on the fringes of the Imperium in sectors like the Spinward Marches, Technology Levels vary wildly. Isolated systems that are visited only once or twice a generation might have slipped back into the darkness, losing technology to war or disaster. On other worlds, secret research bases, isolationist colonies or Ancient relics hold scientific secrets of vast worth.

Even on a low-technology world, there might be examples of higher technology. A warlord on a primitive planet might enforce his rule with advanced weapons imported from offworld; colony worlds are often dependant on their sponsor civilisation for supplies and support. Some low-technology worlds are aware of the larger universe, and have consciously decided to reject higher technology.

TL 0: (Primitive) No technology. TL 0 species have only discovered the simplest tools and principles, and are on a par with Earth's Stone Age.

TL 1: (Primitive) Roughly on a par with Bronze or Iron age technology. TL 1 science is mostly superstition, but they can manufacture weapons and work metals.

TL 2: (Primitive) Renaissance technology. TL 2 brings with it a greater understanding of chemistry, physics, biology and astronomy as well as the scientific method.

TL 3: (Primitive) The advances of TL 2 are now applied, bringing the germ of industrial revolution and steam power. Primitive firearms now dominate the battlefield. This is roughly comparable to the early 19th century.

TL 4: (Industrial) The transition to industrial revolution is complete, bringing plastics, radio and other such inventions. Roughly comparable to the late 19th/early 20th century.

TL 5: (Industrial) TL 5 brings widespread electrification, telecommunications and internal combustion. At the high end of the TL, atomics and primitive computing appear. Roughly on a par with the mid–20th century.

TL 6: (Industrial) TL 6 brings the development of fission power and more advanced computing. Advances in materials technology and rocketry bring about the dawn of the space age.

TL 7: (Pre-Stellar) A pre-stellar society can reach orbit reliably and has telecommunications satellites. Computers become common. At the time of writing, humanity is currently somewhere between TL 7 and TL 8.

TL 8: (Pre-Stellar) At TL 8, it is possible to reach other worlds in the same system, although terraforming or full colonisation are not within the culture's capacity. Permanent space habitats become possible. Fusion power becomes commercially viable.

TL 9: (Pre-Stellar) The defining element of TL 9 is the development of gravity manipulation, which makes space travel vastly safer and faster. This research leads to development of the Jump drive, which occurs near the end of this Tech Level. TL 9 cultures can colonise other worlds, although going to a colony is generally a one-way trip.

TL 10: (Early Stellar) With the advent of Jump, nearby systems are opened up. Orbital habitats and factories become common. Interstellar travel and trade lead to an economic boom. Colonies become much more viable.

TL 11: (Early Stellar) The first true artificial intelligences become possible, as computers are able to model synaptic networks. Grav-supported structures reach to the heavens. Jump–2 travel becomes possible, allowing easier travel beyond the one-Jump stellar mains.

TL 12: (Average Stellar) Weather control revolutionises terraforming and agriculture. Man-portable plasma weapons and carrier-mounted fusion guns make the battlefield untenable for unarmoured combatants. Jump–3 travel is developed.

TL 13: (Average Stellar) The battle dress appears on the battlefield in response to the new weapons. Cloning of body parts becomes easy. Advances in hull design and thruster plates means that spacecraft can easily enter atmosphere and even go underwater. Jump–4 travel.

TL 14: (Average Stellar) Fusion weapons become man-portable. Flying cities appear. Jump–5 travel.

TL 15: (High Stellar) Black globe generators suggest a new direction for defensive technologies, while the development of synthetic anagathics means that the human lifespan is now vastly increased. Jump–6 travel.

Higher Technology Levels exist (indeed, there is no theoretical upper limit) and may appear in other settings or be discovered by pioneering scientists in the Third Imperium.

Galactic Directions

North, south, east, and west are insufficient terms for referring to directions within the galaxy. Instead, the following conventions have achieved widespread acceptance when referring to direction: *Coreward* – toward the galactic core; *Rimward* – toward the rim of the galaxy; *Spinward* – towards the direction the galaxy is rotating (or spinning); *Trailing* – opposite the spin of the galaxy.

CHARACTER CREATION

In *Traveller*, a character's abilities and skills are determined largely by his training and past experience. Character creation begins with rolling your character's characteristics, six values that describe his beginning physical and mental capabilities. After determining characteristics and a few background skills from your homeworld, it is time to embark on a career. Each character goes through one or more four-year career terms, which give him various skills and benefits. There are risks associated with each career – serving a tour of duty in the Star Marines may give a character a grounding in combat and weapons use, but the character risks injury in battle. A term spent in a corporation is unlikely to get the character injured or killed, but won't usually give skills valuable in combat.

In addition to skills, characters can pick up benefits such as cash or contacts from a career. However, there are limits on how many career terms a character can go through – the risks of aging or injury mount up over time, and most characters will find themselves trying two or three careers. Do not be surprised if your character turns out quite different to how you originally anticipated!

After going through one or more careers and collecting the benefits, you can establish ties between your character and other player characters and pick a campaign package, both of which give extra skills.

Basic character generation should be done as a group by all the players. For generating characters solitaire, and for other alternate forms of character generation such as point allocation, see page 40.

CHARACTERISTICS

Every person and creature in *Traveller* has several characteristics that describe their base mental and physical potential. The basic characteristics for a human are:

Strength (Str): A character's physical strength, fitness and forcefulness.

Dexterity (Dex): Physical co-ordination and agility, reflexes. A character's Dexterity affects his accuracy in ranged combat and his reaction speed.

Endurance (End): A character's ability to sustain damage, stamina and determination. A character's resilience is based on his Endurance score, so a character with a low Endurance score will be very vulnerable in a firefight.

Intelligence (Int): A character's intellect and quickness of mind. Intelligence is used in a great many skill checks.

Education (Edu): A measure of a character's learning and experience. Education is also used in a great many skill checks.

Social Standing (Soc): A character's place in society. Characters with a high Social Standing can claim a noble title in the Imperium and will find life much easier thanks to their reputation and contacts.

Character Generation Checklist

Basic character generation uses the following steps:

1. Roll characteristics and determine characteristic modifiers.
2.
 - a. Choose a homeworld.
 - b. Gain background skills.
3.
 - a. Choose a career. You cannot choose a career you have already left.
 - b. Roll to qualify for that career.
 - c. If you qualify for that career, go to Step 4.
 - d. If you do not qualify for that career, then you can go to the Draft or enter the Drifter career. The Draft can put you back into a career you have been forced to leave, at your old rank. You can only apply for the Draft once.
4. If this is your first time on this career, get your basic training.
5. Choose a specialisation for this career.
6.
 - a. Choose one of the Skills and Training tables for this career and roll on it.
 - b. Roll for survival on this career.
 - c. If you succeed, go to Step 7.
 - d. If you did not succeed, then events have forced you from this career. Roll on the Mishap table, then go to Step 9.
7.
 - a. Roll for Events.
 - b. Optionally, establish a Connection with another player character.
8.
 - a. Roll for Advancement
 - b. If you succeed, choose one of the skills and training tables for this career and roll on it. Increase your Rank and take any bonus skills from the Ranks table for this career.
 - c. If you roll less than the number of terms spent in this career, you must leave this career.
 - d. Military characters (Army, Navy, Marines) can roll for commission instead of rolling for advancement.
9. Increase your age by 4 years. If your character is 34 or older, roll for Aging.
10. If you are leaving the career, roll for Benefits.
11. If you have left your current career, then go to Step 3 to choose a new career, or to Step 12 if you wish to finish your character. Otherwise, go to Step 5.
12. Finalise any Connections with other characters.
13. Choose a Campaign Skill Pack and allocate skills from that pack.
14. Purchase starting equipment and, if you can afford it, a spacecraft.

NOBLE TITLES

Social Standing	Sample Titles
11	Knight
12	Baron
13	Marquis
14	Count
15	Duke

To determine your character's characteristics, roll 2d6 six times and allocate them to the six basic characteristics in any order. Record them on the character sheet. Strength, Dexterity and Endurance are collectively referred to as 'physical characteristics'. Intelligence and Education are referred to as 'mental characteristics'.

For each characteristic, determine the characteristic Dice Modifier (DM).

CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

Characteristic	Dice Modifier
0	-3
1-2	-2
3-5	-1
6-8	+0
9-11	+1
12-14	+2
15	+3

The maximum level for a characteristic for an unaugmented human character is 15.

SKILLS

Skills are the most important aspect of a character in *Traveller*, and are discussed in detail in the chapter starting on page 48. A character's proficiency in a skill is denoted by his level in that skill.

If a character has *no* level in a skill, then he is *untrained* and will suffer a -3 Dice Modifier when trying to use that skill.

If a character has *zero* level in a skill (Skill 0), then he is competent in using that skill, but has little experience. He does not get any bonus from his skill ranks when using that skill but at least he avoids the penalty for being untrained.

If a character has one or more level in a skill (Level 1, Level 2, and so on) then he is trained in that skill. Each rank represents several years of experience using that skill. A character with Level 2-3 in a skill is a skilled professional in that field. A character with Medic 2 could be a doctor; a character with Medic 4 is a famous surgeon or specialist.

Some skills have *specialities* – specialised forms of that skill. A character picks a speciality when he gains level 1 in a skill with specialities. For example, a character might have Engineer 0,

allowing him to make any Engineer skill checks without an unskilled penalty. He might then gain a level in Engineer, giving him Engineer (Jump drives) 1. He would make all Engineer checks involving Jump drives at a +1 DM, but would make all other Engineer checks at a +0 DM. A character can have multiple specialities in a skill – an engineer might have Engineer (Jump drives) 1 and Engineer (power plant) 2. He would make checks related to Jump drives with a +1 DM, checks related to power plants with a +2 DM and all other Engineer checks with a +0 DM.

BACKGROUND SKILLS

Before embarking on your careers, you get a number of background skills equal to 3 + your Education DM (1 to 5, depending on your Education score). You must take the skills listed for your homeworld; any extra skills can be taken from the education list.

Homeworld: Growing up on your homeworld gave you skills that depend on the planet's nature. You can select any skill that matches your homeworld's planetary description and trade codes. If you came from a planet already established by *Traveller* books or by the Referee, then consult those sources for the planet's description. Otherwise, just note down what traits you chose for your homeworld – you can generate the world later using the rules on page 167.

- Agricultural:** Animals 0
- Asteroid:** Zero-G 0
- Desert:** Survival 0
- Fluid Oceans:** Seafarer 0
- Garden:** Animals 0
- High Technology:** Computers 0
- High Population:** Streetwise 0
- Ice-Capped:** Vacc Suit 0
- Industrial:** Trade 0
- Low Technology:** Survival 0
- Poor:** Animals 0
- Rich:** Carouse 0
- Water World:** Seafarer 0
- Vacuum:** Vacc Suit 0

(The definitions for these terms can be found on page 181.)

Education: A formal education gives you a basic level of competence in various sciences and academic disciplines. Any character may choose from the following list:

- Admin 0, Advocate 0, Art 0, Carouse 0, Comms 0, Computer 0, Drive 0, Engineer 0, Language 0, Medic 0, Physical Science 0, Life Science 0, Social Science 0, Space Science 0, Trade 0.

At this point, you are eighteen years old.

For example, Morn has an Education characteristic of 8, which has a DM of +0. He therefore has 0+3 background skills. He comes from a poor desert world, so he takes Animals 0 and Survival 0. He takes Drive 0 from the education list.