

SFB CADET TRAINING MODULE

FOREWORD

The situation is all too familiar to every Star Fleet Battles player. You invite a friend over so that you can introduce him to the joys of playing SFB. He (or perhaps she) is a trekkie, has every book, and has seen every episode. This prime candidate, however, panics when confronted by not one but three fat rulebooks, not to mention the 400 or so pages of SFB material printed in Captain's Log, *NEXUS*, the SSD books, and Starletter. (And remember: Monopoly has no errata so he probably cannot grasp the concept.) All too many potential SFB players have run screaming from their first encounter with the game.

INTRODUCTION

This module is intended to solve that problem by providing a system wherein experienced players can teach new players. Veteran SFB players will find combat within the Cadet Training Module to be incredibly tame, simple, and probably boring. All of the really fun rules simply aren't here. The point is, in his (or her) first dozen games of SFB, your potential player doesn't need to know much more than how to move and shoot. After that has been mastered, you can show them the rest of the rules — one at a time.

These rules are written primarily as a guide to a Veteran player in explaining the game to a Cadet player. (This is traditionally the best way to learn a game.) The Veteran can play against the Cadet, but it is better to have two Cadets play each other while the Veteran (showing careful impartiality) instructs both of them. Avoid having one Veteran coach each Cadet as this will rapidly turn into a contest between the Veterans, leaving the Cadets as bewildered as before.

The term "Cadet" is intended in its best sense: someone who is just beginning to learn a very complicated subject. Everyone who plays SFB was a Cadet once. Two points need to be made. First, the term "Cadet" is not a strictly defined rules element. There is no special relationship between the Cadet Training Module, Cadet Level Rules, or Cadet Level PBM. Secondly, while this module will assume that your Cadets are part of the 98% that are male; female Cadets are welcome.

BEWARE OF BAFFLING YOUR CADETS

Take it easy and don't try to take on too many concepts in each battle. Remember that the point is to get the Cadets interested in SFB. Don't worry too much about winning and losing until they have played a few games.

Above all, treat your Cadet in a friendly and helpful manner. Do not act like a drill sergeant. Do not berate or belittle the Cadet. Don't even dream of making him do push-ups. You didn't learn the game in a day, and neither will he.

Most importantly, *don't show him the whole rulebook at one time*. It's less intimidating than it looks (when you realize that half of the pages are charts, scenarios, and ship descriptions). Skip any references (in rulebook sections you read to him) to rules that aren't being dealt with.

SHIPS AND SSD'S

There are three SSD sheets provided for this module. They represent the familiar Federation CA, Klingon D7, and Romulan War Eagle, the basic ships of the game. Veteran players will note that they have less than half as many weapon and power boxes as the ships you are used to, and even fewer of the other types. For the first few games, that will be all that you need. Note that there is one Bridge box on the ship, but that is the last box to be destroyed in combat.

Anyone who will take the trouble to train Cadets is welcome to make as many copies of these SSDs as he needs for the job.

We have no plans to publish any other "Cadet Cruiser SSDs" for this module. By the time your Cadet has mastered these three ships, he'll be ready to move on to the real thing. Similarly, we have not bothered with crew units, BPVs, or other details.

These "Cadet Cruisers" are not the only ships that can be used to teach SFB. For years, Veterans have used police ships and PFs for this function.

CADET TRAINING PROGRAM

The module is organized into three levels of increasing complexity.

FIRST LEVEL: In the first level, the Cadet will be introduced to turn modes, impulse movement, and direct-fire weapons. He will not have to deal with energy allocation or damage allocation; these procedures are abstracted.

SECOND LEVEL: In the second level, the Cadet will be introduced to damage allocation (using a simplified chart) and energy allocation (with several functions, such as shields, fire control, and life support ignored). In the later stages of the second level, the Cadet will be introduced to seeking weapons.

THIRD LEVEL: The third level is used to introduce the first of the standard rules, such as tractor beams, into the game.

Now, let's begin your Cadet's training.

GAME INTRODUCTION

You can skip section A, replacing it with comments about various episodes you have both seen. Follow that with this statement:

You are going to be playing a simplified version of a very detailed starship combat game. There are perhaps two dozen different pieces of equipment on a starship in Star Fleet Battles. (These two dozen items are selected from a list of more than 50 such items.) In the Cadet Training Module you will be concerned only with a few of them, never more than six or seven. From time to time, various advanced rules will be commented on, but we won't use them until you master the basics of the game system. There are several basic concepts, and the training module is designed to introduce you to these concepts in easily manageable steps.

FIRST LEVEL, CADET TRAINING PROGRAM

In the first level, the Cadet will be introduced to movement, turn modes, the impulse procedure, and direct-fire weapons. He will not have to deal with energy allocation or damage allocation; these procedures are abstracted.

Read and explain the following rules to the Cadet.

MOVEMENT: (C1.1), (C1.2), (C1.31), (C1.4-First Paragraph Only).

TURN MODES: (C3.1), (C3.2), (C3.3), (C3.4). Note that the turn modes of the Cadet ships are marked on their SSDs.

COMBAT: (D1.0), (D2.0)-(D2.2), (D3.1)-(D3.2).

WEAPONS: (E1.1)-(E1.4), (E2.1)-(E2.12), (E2.4), (E3.0)-(E3.3) but not (E3.31), (E4.1)-(E4.13).

NOTE: Only explain the Disruptors or Photons to the Cadet, not both. Give him his choice of the two ships and explain only the weapons he will need. Give him an overview of the enemy weapons so he will know what to expect in terms of rate of fire and damage. Later, teach him the other weapon and trade ships.

Then read the following rules to the Cadet.

IMPULSES: Each turn is divided into a number of impulses. In the standard rules there are 32 impulses per turn, but for now we will have only eight. The important thing is to get used to the fact that you can fire each of your weapons once per turn, but that you will have eight opportunities (more in the higher levels) to fire and be fired at during each turn.

Each impulse will consist of only three steps: Move the ship, fire some (or all, or none) of its weapons, and resolve how much damage was scored and what that damage did. Later, in more advanced versions of the rules, there will be things that must be done at the start and end of each turn, and there will be many more things to do during an impulse. Don't worry about that for now.

SPEED: For our first game, we will assume that both ships are moving at a speed of eight hexes per turn, that is, both ships move on every impulse. After that, we will play with one ship moving at a speed of eight and the other moving at a slower speed. In later levels, much faster speeds will be possible.

ENERGY ALLOCATION: In SFB, one of the most important functions is to allocate energy. This is done once per turn. Basically, you calculate how much energy you have and then spend it doing various things (reinforcing shields, moving, firing, operating special equipment, etc.) For your first few games, we won't worry about that. Assume that your efficient engineer is taking care of this for you. You will have enough energy to fire each weapon one time during each turn (exception: see photons below) and to move at the specified speed. For now, moving and shooting will be enough.

PHOTON TORPEDOES: Photon torpedoes are very powerful weapons, but take a long time to arm. You can only fire a photon torpedo every second turn. If you fire one of your torpedoes on one turn, you cannot fire it on the next turn, but could fire it (but don't have to) on the turn after that. Note that you cannot wait four turns without firing and then fire on four turns in a row; you have to wait one turn after each shot. The two tubes work independently of each other; you can fire one on each turn.

DAMAGE ALLOCATION: In SFB, any damage points that penetrate the shields are distributed on the SSD sheet by a special table. In your first few games, we won't worry about that. Whenever your opponent scores damage on your ship, you can mark this on any of the boxes you want.