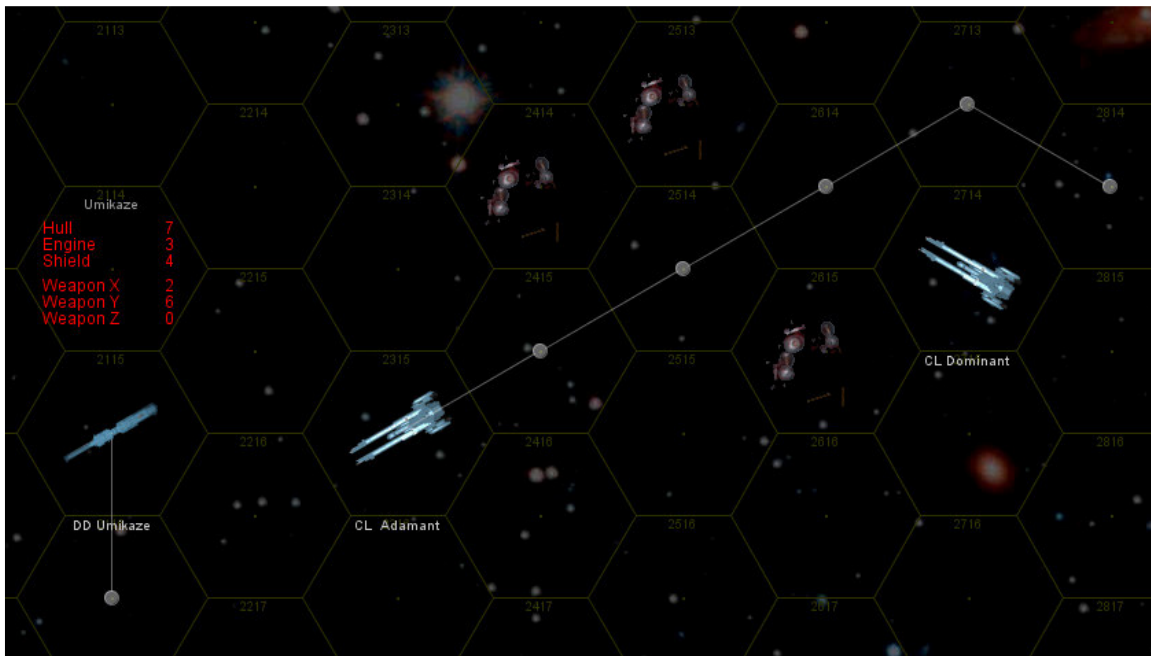


# Starmada Vassal Playing Guide 1.0



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Starmada: Admiralty Edition is a game of tactical space combat produced by [Majestic Twelve Games](#). This Vassal module for the game can only be played if you own the rules. The module was programmed by K. Curow and the counter art was produced by Mike Dugan. We'd like to thank Daniel Kast of Majestic Twelve Games for permission to create and distribute this module.

I would personally like to thank Mike Dugan for all the awesome work he did on creating counter art and wicked cool explosions. If the module looks good it's because of him. Since I simply used his artwork in building the mod, if something doesn't work, it's not his fault!

I'd also like to thank the playtesters, Laurence and Erik, for several fun, tense games. Well, also for pointing out flaws in the module which will hopefully enhance your play.

"Starmada: Admiralty Edition", "Starmada", "Imperial Starmada Sourcebook", and "Hammer & Claw: The Grumm Wars Sourcebook" are trademarks of Majestic Twelve Games.

This is version 1.0, released May 28, 2009.

This guide is an effort to document the tools available to the Starmada: Admiralty Edition player using Vassal. The guide is divided into four sections: The Vassal Module, Rules and Tools, Playing by Email, and Playing Live.

The Rules and Tools section explains how Starmada can be played using this Vassal module. In particular, it outlines how various rules and rules options are enabled in Vassal.

Playing by Email describes how best to play Starmada when there is a lag in communication time.

Playing Live is a very short section since most of the useful information has already been explained in previous sections. Also, playing live is akin to playing face-to-face.

1. [The Vassal Module](#)
2. [Rules and Tools](#)
3. [Playing by Email](#)
4. [Playing Live Online](#)

## 1. The Vassal Module

Most of the features of this module should be self-evident if you are a veteran of Vassal gaming. If not, you might have to poke around a bit to get the hang of where to find everything.

The first place to start is the bar across the top. The button labeled Pieces contains all the ship counters for the game, as well as markers needed to track various rules features and terrain counters. The ship counters are divided into five factions, each with its own appearance style.

Record Moves is an important feature since Starmada requires that players secretly record their move orders each turn. This button leads to a window which includes the option "Delayed" which allows players to record their moves and save them but keep them secret from their opponents until revealed.

Thrust Requirements, Hit Table and Hit Modifiers are all charts from Starmada.

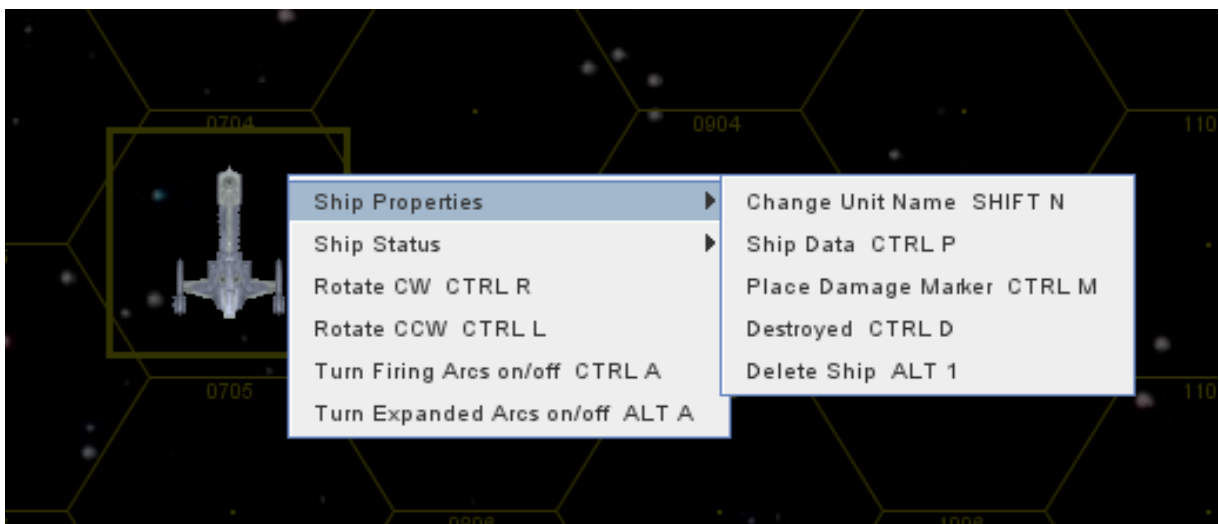
The Marker Key is for quickly identifying an in-game marker attached to a ship counter. There are many such counters so this can be handy in a game with many optional rules in play.

The Graveyard is where all good ships go to die... or when they're already dead, actually.

The remaining buttons include a dice roller, a way to save the map in its current state as an image file, zoom buttons for the map and the "mov" marker which erases those pesky "moved" lines that appear to trace the path of a unit which has moved.

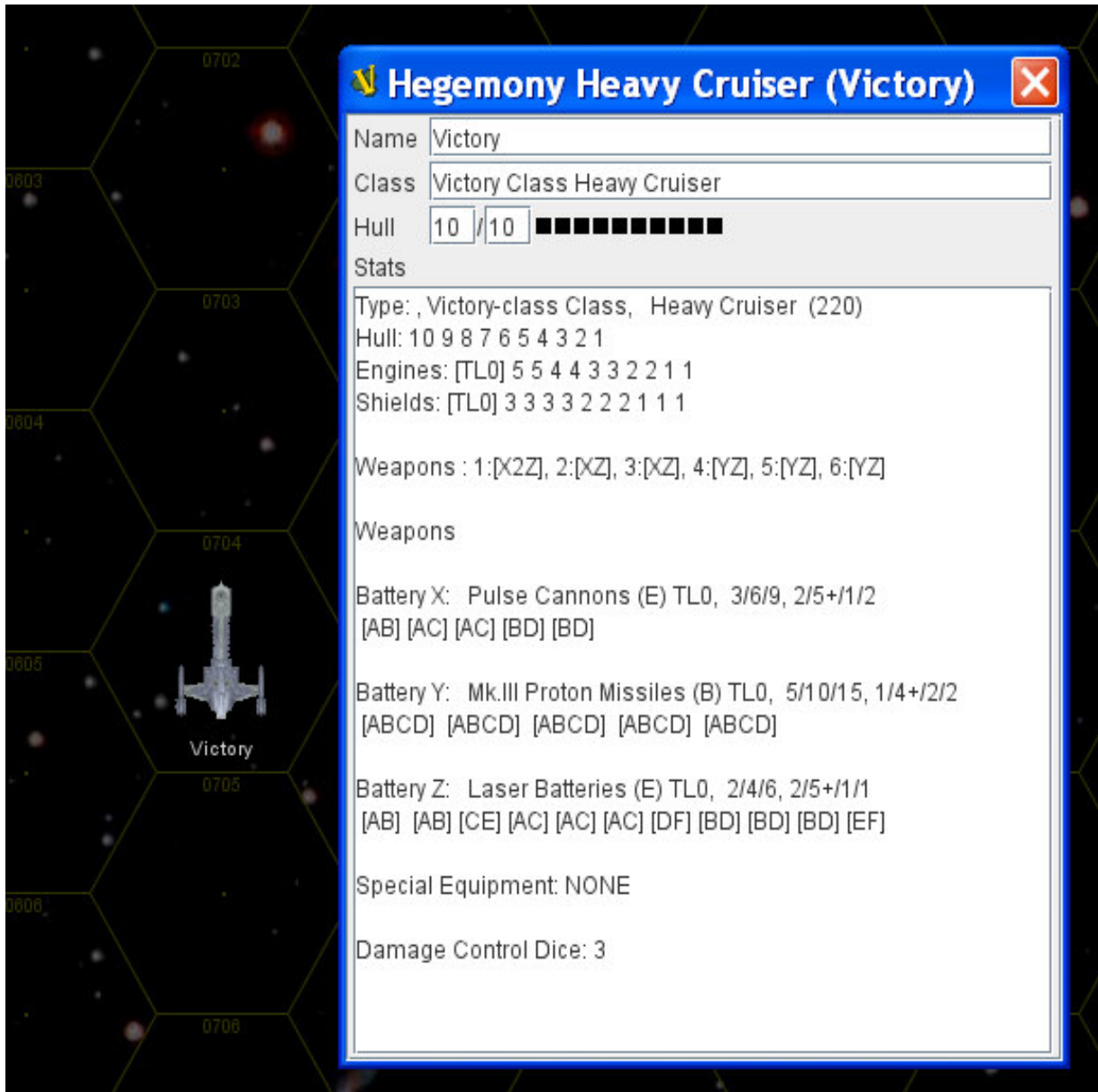
There is also a Range thread which calculates range between hexes and also draws a red line which is extremely useful for checking weapon firing arcs.

Most of the module's features are accessed by right-clicking on a game piece. For example, when you right-click on a ship you get the following menu. Each option also shows you the keyboard shortcut for that menu item.



The Ship Properties submenu contains various options to change the name of the unit (which will be displayed on the mapboard). By holding down Shift and pressing N, you can also access this command.

Ship Data is an important feature. It allows you to enter a text version of the ship's data. This can, for example, be cut and pasted from the Shipyard excel sheet available in the [MJ12 Starmada forums](#). With this text in place, you and your opponent can track your ship damage in Vassal. See below for the example of the lead ship in the Victory Class of Heavy Cruisers.



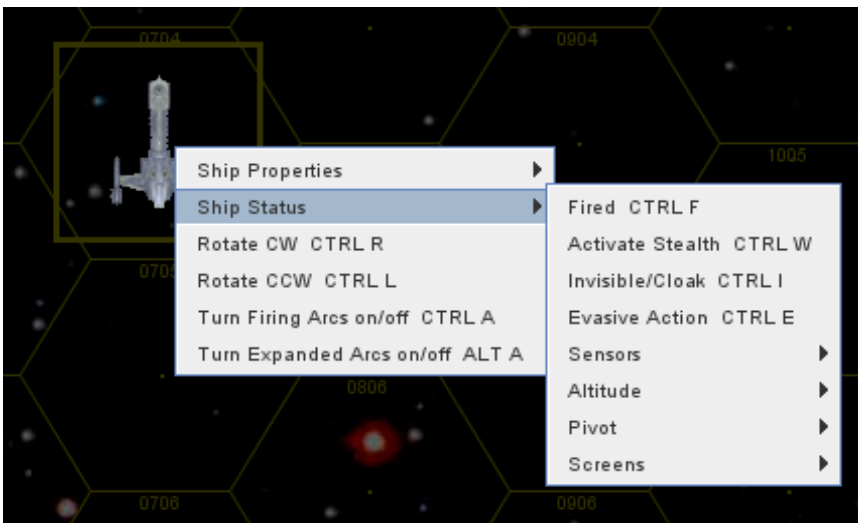
In Starmada, damage is applied only in the End Phase of the turn. As a result, during the Combat Phase, a mechanism is needed to track damage before applying it to the ship taking the damage. This has been handled in Vassal by creating a "Damage Marker." By choosing the command, "Place Damage Marker." This creates a new counter on top of the ship which can be used to record damage. The marker has its own menu accessed by right-clicking and may be named after the ship it refers to. Because it is a separate counter it can be dragged to an adjacent hex for easier viewing. (See below for an example of a ship with a Damage Marker atop it.)



When the ship is destroyed in the course of play, the Destroyed command will send the ship to the Graveyard and place a debris image in the hex where it was destroyed. In the Graveyard, ships retain all current settings.

Delete will remove the ship from the board – as if it never existed at all.

The Ship Status submenu provides access to other marker options. (see below)

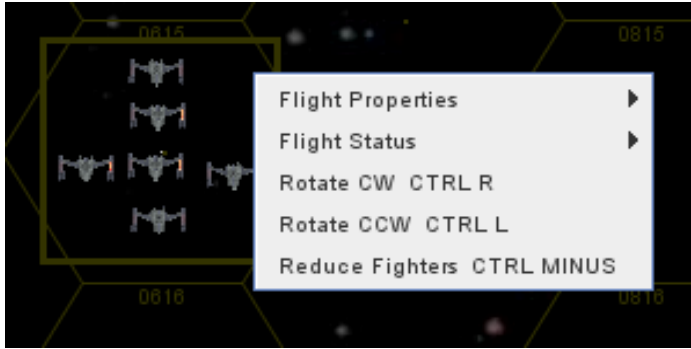


Most of these involve optional rules or markers that can be placed on the ship counter to remind players of its status (e.g., Fired, Evasive Action, etc.).

Also, in the main unit menu, you will see the commands for rotating the counter to face a new hexside (Rotate ClockWise and CounterClockWise).

The final two commands toggle Firing Arcs which make it easier to determine which arcs a target falls into.

Flights have a similar unit menu used in the same way.



The Reduce Fighters command reduces the visible images from 6 to 5. When using customized flights, players will find that by reducing the number to 1 and then reducing it further, the number of fighters in the image will cycle to 8 and back down to 1.

Flights also have a data sheet called Properties, which is a text field in which you can insert the stats and abilities for that flight.

## 2. The Rules and Tools

Every effort has been made to implement all rules and optional rules described in *Starmada: Admiralty Edition*, as well as the two supplements: *Imperial Starmada Sourcebook*, and *Hammer & Claw*.

The following rules are implemented. If the option is implemented in a way other than through the Property Sheet ("Ship Data") then a comment is included.

### Starship Options: B1-B14

#### B3: Cloaking Device

In the unit menu, in the Ship Status submenu, you can find the command "Invisible/Cloak." Clicking this will make the unit invisible to your opponent. See sections below for suggestions on ways to implement this rule in online and PBEM play.

#### B8: Mines

In the Pieces box, there is a tab labeled Terrain which contains counters to represent the various sizes of minefield.

#### B10: Screens

In the Ship Status submenu, you can activate a Screens feature which allows you to assign screens to any ship. The Screens numbers will be visible on the mapboard.

#### B11: Stealth

This is properly recorded on the Ship Data page but a reminder is included in the Ship Status submenu which will create a marker on the ship counter itself.

### **Weapon Options: C1-C6**

These are always recorded under Ship Data in a text format as outlines above.

### **Movement Options: D1-D9**

#### D4: Evasive Action

This is included in the Ship Status submenu which will create a marker on the ship counter itself.

#### D5: Pivots

This is included in the Ship Status submenu which will create a marker on the ship counter itself.

#### D6: Rolls

In the Pieces box there is a tab labeled Markers. Here you will find a Roll marker used to indicate which ships have rolled over.

#### D9: Three-Dimensional Movement

This is implemented for all units by activation of Altitude under the Ship (or Flight) Status submenu.

### **Combat Options: E1-E6**

#### E3: Explosions

In the Pieces box, under the Marker tab, there is an explosion marker which can be used as an overlay, showing which hexes are affected by the Explosion.

#### E6: Shield Reinforcement

This is handled the same as Screens (see above).

### **Fighter Options: F1-F8**

#### F1: Customized Fighters

Right-clicking on the Flight counter brings up a unit menu. The Flight Properties submenu contains the Properties command. This brings up a data sheet in which text information about the flight may be entered just as ship data is entered (again, it is recommended you use the text output from the Shipyard excel sheet).

#### F2: Dogfights

In the Pieces box there is a Marker called Dogfight which can be placed in the hex with two opposing flights engaged in a dogfight.

#### F6: Strikers

Every faction in the Vassal Mod has its own counter for Fighters and Bombers (some have Interceptors, as well). Generic Striker, Seeker and Boarding Pod counters are available under their own tab in the Pieces box.

#### F7: Breachers

There is no specific counter for Breachers but one could easily use the counter for Strikers to fulfill the same role.

#### F8: Combat Interception

In the Flight Status submenu, a marker can be toggled on and off which indicates the flight is under Combat Interception orders.

### **Terrain: G1-G5**

G1, G2, G5: Asteroids, Black Holes, Planets

In the Terrain tab of the Pieces box there are counters to represent the various sized asteroid fields, black holes and planets. There is also a counter for individual large asteroids, as described in the rules. (Note: Dust Cloud and Nebula do not need representation on the gameboard because they "encompass the entire playing area.")

## **3. Playing By Email (PBEM)**

Playing by email requires some patience. You will have to conduct your orders, moves, etc., and then email it to your opponent. Then you must patiently wait by your computer, constantly refreshing your email to see if your damned, slow opponent has responded yet. Oh, why hasn't he responded yet?!?!

Yes, some patience is required. Fortunately, we are here to help. You and your opponent can absolutely agree to play the game as described in the rules, trading as many files as necessary. What follows is a description of how the turn sequence might be used in conjunction with playing by email. Based on playtesting, I will make some suggestions for adjustments to the rules to speed up play.

It's very useful, if you haven't PBEMed before, to agree upon some kind of naming mechanism for your game log files. For example: Game1\_001\_Empire Move Orders.vlog. Then the next log might be named: Game1\_002\_Confederation Move



Orders.vlog.

These rules can be modified to speed up play:

I might clean this up later but this is a step-by-step sequence of how I would recommend playing.

### **Orders and Movement Phase:**

In tabletop Starmada, you both write down your move orders and then, when both are done, you reveal them and all movement takes place simultaneously. This is exactly how it works in the Vassal module.

In my PBEM games, we have done it this way (Let's say Jack goes first and is the Empire faction, while Lancelot is the Confederation faction):

- 1) Figure out what you want your moves to be for each ship and record them on a piece of paper (I actually recorded mine in Notepad so I could cut and paste it later)
- 2) Open the game with both setups complete and begin recording a log file in Vassal.
- 3) Click on the Record Moves button on the top leftish part of the dashboard.
- 4) In the window that pops up, there is a tab called "Delayed", click on this.
- 5) Click on the NEW button and another window pops up. Give it a title like Empire Turn 1 Move Orders. Copy over your move orders into the text box (They might say, for example: Battlecruiser Lion 3P2. If you have other kinds of orders to give you can do that here too, for example Active or Passive Sensors). Click "ok" and then "Save" when you're done. A message should appear in the main text line "Jack has created message "Empire Turn 1 Move Orders".
- 6) Now, end the log file and email it to Lancelot.
- 7) Lancelot opens the log file, watches it by advancing the arrow in the upper left (which will take no time as nothing visible happens).
- 8) Lancelot will be prompted to begin a new log file and will do so, giving it the next name in the sequence.
- 9) Lancelot clicks on the Record Moves button and then the Delayed tab. He will see that there is a message there recorded by Player "Empire" with the date and time it was saved and the name of the note. On the far right is a box (unchecked) in the "Revealed?" column. Lancelot can click on the message but CANNOT SEE IT until Jack has revealed it.
- 10) In our games, we decided upon the following sequence. Lancelot now records a delayed message just like Jack did, only titling it Confederation Turn 1 Move Orders. Follow the instructions above.
- 11) After saving the message, Lancelot then reopens the Record Moves window and finds his message in the list. Click on the message Confederation Turn 1 Move Orders. When you do this the button "Reveal" becomes available and you can click on it. After

clicking on it, click on the Save button at the bottom. A message appears in the main text line which says: "Lancelot has revealed message "Confederation Turn 1 Move Orders.""

12) Now, Lancelot can move his ships on the board according to the orders he gave. When he is done, he ends the log file and emails it to Jack.

13) Jack loads up Lancelot's log file and replays it, watching Lancelot's ships move. When done viewing, he will be prompted to begin a new log file. Start a new log file and follow the instructions above to reveal your delayed move orders message. Once it is revealed, you can now make your moves on the board (still recording the log file!). When done, you can end the log file and send it back to Lancelot to review your moves.

### **Flight Phase:**

Since this is a PBEM game you have a couple choices. If you follow the rules as written (RAW), you alternate activating your flights (remember to record a log file of your move and fire results!). In our playtesting, we decided to modify the rules to make PBEM go faster by alternately activating two flights at a time. In games with a very large number of flights on both sides, I would recommend increasing that to three. If one side has very few, I would recommend activating two at a time since the bulk of the other sides flights will all go at the same time anyway.

### **Fire Phase:**

Now it's fire phase. Since this is a PBEM game you again have a couple choices. If you follow the rules as written (RAW), you alternate firing your ships (remember to record a log file of your fire orders and fire results!). In our playtesting, we decided to modify the rules to make PBEM go faster. We took the move orders mechanic of the rules and applied it to the fire phase. In other words, we secretly record ALL of our fire orders for each ship using the delayed message feature in Vassal and revealed it in much the same way. The sequence of a turn becomes this.

1. Jack records his move secretly and sends to Lancelot.
2. Lancelot records his move, reveals it and moves his ships, sends back to Jack.
3. Jack reveals his move orders, moves his ships. He then secretly records his fire orders for all ships (an example fire order might be: BC Lion fires at Enemy Ship A with 3 Particle Cannons, fires 5 Defense Lasers at Enemy Flight 1). Sends to Lancelot.
4. Lancelot records his fire orders for all ships, reveals it. He then conducts his fire and records the results on each target using the "Place Hit Marker" feature. (Remember, in Starmada the results of the fire phase are not enacted until the End Phase, so all ships get to fire before any damage is actually marked off on a ship.) He then sends this to Jack.
5. Jack weeps at the destruction wrought on his shiny vessels, collects himself, and then reveals his previously recorded fire orders. He conducts his fire, again recording all damage using the Hit Markers and rejoicing at the revenge he has reaped. When done,

he then uses the results on the hit markers placed on his own ships to mark off damage on the Ship Data page for each unit. When finished, he can delete the Hit Markers on his own ships. At this point, he knows the location of Lancelot's ships and can see what kind of damage he has done, so he might as well record his move for the next turn in a Delayed Message. Now he can send his log file to Lancelot.

6. Lancelot, feeling confident after sending off the results of his own fire phase to Jack, now receives Jack's fire phase results and breaks down in a puddle of tears. After a strong cup of coffee and some cuddling with his favorite teddy bear, Lancelot returns to his computer to mark off the damage against his ships in the Ship Data log for each unit. When complete, he records his moves for his now damaged ships. Seeing that Jack has already recorded his intended moves, Lancelot can reveal his and move his ships on the board. He sends this log to Jack.

7. Jack reviews, reveals his move orders, moves his ships and records his fire orders. Sends it to Lancelot.

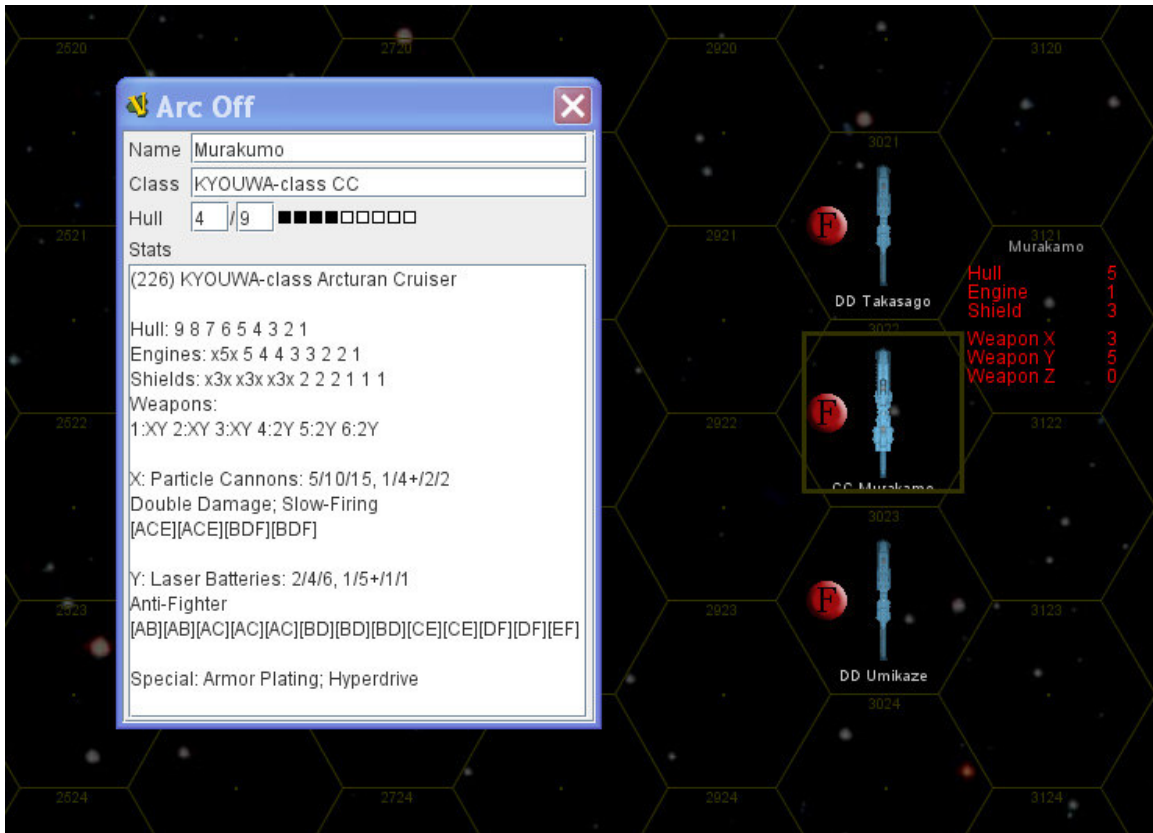
8. Lancelot records, reveals and conducts his fire phase, sends it to Jack.

9. Jack reviews, reveals his fire orders and conducts his fire orders. Then he marks off hits against his ships caused by Lancelot, records his new move orders, returns to Lancelot.

10. Lancelot now... (back to #6 and loop)

In End Phase, each player records the results of combat, marking off damage on the text Ship Data sheet for his ships. As soon as he has done that, he can now also record his moves for Orders Phase before sending it back to his opponent. No reason to wait, as moves are revealed afterwards. In playtesting, we settled upon a convention for recording damage. It can either be marked off as small x's bracketing the damaged item, or the number or letters can be replaced with an x.

See below where both engines and shields are damaged. Hull is recorded in a more graphic way, as you can see. It is a closeup of damage being assigned on the in-game data sheet to the Murakamo. The little x's bracketing ship systems indicate damage (see Engines and Shields). Alternatively, they could be replaced with X's. So a ship beginning with shields of SHIELDS: 1 1 1 1 that took two damage to shields would look like SHIELDS: X X 1 1.



Please contact me with questions or suggestions about this section.

## 4. Playing Live Online

Playing live is really no different than playing across a table from your opponent. You could even use Skype so you could talk to each other while playing.

Writing orders should be done as described for PBEM. No change is needed to rules such as Combat Phase (alternating ship fire requires no more time than it does on a tabletop) or Fighter Phase (again, alternating Flight activation as in tabletop play is fast).

This was never playtested, so contact me immediately if there is a problem syncing or playing.