

Anteel

A Deterministic Space Wargame
by Jasper McChesney

General Introduction

“Welcome to the war room, my lord. I’m very pleased that your lordship has chosen to involve himself personally in the conduct of our fleets, very much unlike his predecessor. As you know, the general state of war continues unabated. The other powers have shown no sign of lessening their own efforts to control the valuable resource which we have called Anteel. It seems to be scattered throughout the known part of the galaxy, mostly in large asteroids. Our ability to scan for the material, while improving in leaps and bounds, my lord, is still limited in range, so we must scour every system with diligence. Needless to say, we must prevent our enemies from acquiring any more of this valuable element, and must secure as much as possible for our own use.

“If you look here on this display, you will see a readout on our fleet size and composition—and formidable it is. Our main battle fleet, excluding various subsidiary craft, is composed of four classes of attack craft: here is a readout on one. Each vessel is rated for various capabilities:

Hull is a rating of how much enemy fire the vessel can sustain before being destroyed. It also tends to reflect size of course.

Armor for all craft is rated as one of three options: light, medium, or heavy. The heavier a ship’s armor, the less damage will be inflicted on it with every hit it takes.

Speed is how much space the vessel can cover in a given amount of time. It allows quick engagement with the enemy, and a better ability to maneuver or flee.

Reverse tells one how quickly the ship can move backwards using its forward-facing thrusters. Not all ships can move in reverse, but it is a valuable tactical advantage.

The **Turn** rating indicates how quickly the ship can rotate about its own axis to face in a different direction. Turning is of vital importance because ships need to turn in order to maneuver into a position from which they can fire on their enemies.

A Ship’s **Arc** tells how easily a ship can bring its guns to bear on an enemy without the need to turn and face him. It describes the area in front of the ship which it can always hit.

Order indicates how responsive a ship is to the changing battlefield. Ships with a good order rating will be able to react to their enemies and catch them off guard more easily.

Finally, all ships are also equipped with powerful **weapons** that are rated for their destructive abilities based on range and enemy armor. Some ships perform well even at long range while others do not; some will be good at penetrating even heavy armor, while others will only be useful against lighter craft. In general, larger ships are more powerful than smaller ones.

“Now, my lord, I’d like to introduce you to the tactical control simulation we use here. In front of you is a large surface, divided into hexagonal tiles: each represents a portion of space on the battlefield in question. We represent our forces and enemy forces with small icons, each of which occupies a single hex. Each ship of ours is kept track of separately on these smaller displays, which provide a readout of the ship’s capabilities, and indicate how much enemy fire it has suffered.

“Thanks to our advanced technology, we are able to communicate with our ships and direct their actions in the very midst of a battle. The transmission of information and instructions is not instantaneous though, so within the tactical simulator, we break time down into discreet units. Every twenty minute block of time is called a round, just as in the Imperial games, my lord. For convenience, the planning of fleet actions is further separated into two phases that are dealt with one after the other: movement, and firing. In the movement portion of planning, we can direct our ships to move across space to superior position. In the firing phase, we can indicate targets to be fired on for each of our ships. I shall endeavor to explain each in more detail to your lordship.”

Turn Order

In phases, every ship on the board must act during its designated time. In the movement phase, begin with the ship with the highest order, and once it has gone, proceed down the list until every ship has acted. In the firing phase, do the exact opposite: begin with the lowest ordered ship, and work up. Moving last is preferable because you can react to what your opponent has done, while firing first is advantageous because any ship that is destroyed before its turn comes up will not get a chance to fire.

If there is a tie between ships all controlled by one player, he can move or shoot with them in whatever order he wants. However, if the tie is between ships not on the same side, the following method should be used. Before play has even begun, one player is the even player, and the other is odd—this can be mutually agreed on or flipped for. On odd-numbered turns, all of the “odd” player’s tied ships act before his opponent’s. Thus, the odd player has an advantage during firing, but a disadvantage during movement. On even-numbered turns, the “even” player’s ships go first. During the placement of ships (see below), the odd player “wins” the tie and goes first.

Movement

There are three things which a ship can do when it is its turn to move, move forward by one hex, move backward, or rotate one hex-facing (60 degrees). It can move or turn a number of times dictated by its relevant rating in speed, reverse or turn. (A ship with a speed of five can move forward five hexes for instance). You can intersperse movement and rotation in any way you’d like, so that a ship can move and then turn, or turn and then move, or any combination of the two. Forward movement and rearward movement are mutually exclusive in the same round however; they must do one or the other. Ships do not have to use up their full allotment of speed or turn in a given round of course, and may sit totally still if need be.

Ships can pass through the same hex as one another while moving (regardless of whether they are friends or foes), but no ships can come to rest in the same hex at the end of the movement phase.

Firing

When a ship has opportunity to fire, it may direct its weapons against a single enemy ship each round. There is one main limit on what enemy ships can be fired on: arc. A ship's arc describes what area of hexes its weapons can target. There are four different arcs:



Narrow



Forward



Half



Extended

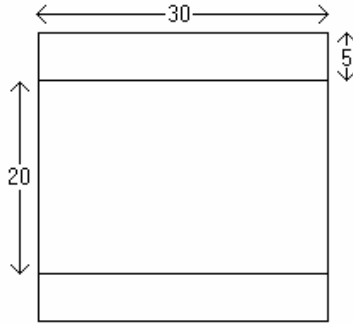
If an enemy vessel is inside the shaded region, it can be targeted. (For each arc, the hexes covered extend out to infinity; use the diagrams to see the pattern of included hexes.)

Next, count the distance between the two ships, including the target vessel's hex but not the attacker's. (When there is not a straight line, in hex faces, between two ships, take the shortest path.) Consult the attacker's weapons table and cross-reference the range with the target ship's armor class. When looking up ranges, choose the row with the highest value which the actual distance does not exceed. If the range is greater than any value listed on the table, the target is out of range and cannot be harmed. Otherwise, the number referenced from the table indicates how much damage is done to the target: check off an equal number of boxes on its reference card. If a ship has its last box marked off, it has been destroyed and should immediately be removed from the game board.

Setup

In every game of Anteel, there are two sides which square off against one another. First, each player needs to choose which empire he is playing (there are five). The players should play different empires, and should know what the other has chosen. One player should also be designated "even" while the other is "odd." This matters only for the case of ties, but it can have real some effect on the game—some players may simply wish to flip for it. Next, ships are selected. Every ship in has a cost written down on its reference card. Both players get a certain number of points with which to buy ships. All of a player's points should be spent on ships. This part of setup should be done in secret, and only after both have made their final choices should the other know what was bought. A standard battle in Anteel is with 100 points.

Next, the ships should be set up on the board facing each other. Although the board size used can vary, the arrangement should general be as follows. The board should be a rectangle, and each side sets up along one edge. There should be a twenty-hex-wide area between the two sides which they cannot place ship into immediately. One either side of it are five-hex-wide regions which one player can put his ships anywhere within. The total length of the setup area should be thirty hexes. (Note that the play-area—that is the whole board—can be much larger than the setup area.) The setup area will thus look as follows:



Players should place their ships one at a time by their ships' order ratings, highest to lowest (just like in the movement phase).

Victory

When one side has lost all its ships, that player has also lost and his opponent is victorious. Ships that run off the edge of the board are considered to have fled, and may not return. If five rounds pass in which no damage was incurred by any ship, the game is called to a halt, and the point costs of any ships destroyed are added up (damaged ships do not count at all). The player with the greatest loss is the loser.

Players may also decide beforehand to limit a battle to a specific length. Six turns is typical for a 100 points battle, and the duration should probably never be less than four turns. When the battle is finished, determine a winner by counting up lost ships, as described above.

The Empires

There are five different sides, or "empires" to play in Anteel. Each empire – which also has a symbol associated with it – has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Empire 1 (Triangle) – These ships have uniformly good armor, but do not do well at long range.

Empire 2 (Circle) – High speed is counter-acted by light armor and poor damage capability against heavy armor.

Empire 3 (Diamond) – Their weapons are good against medium armor but poor against heavy. They are good at long range, but generally have poor arcs, and somewhat less-than-average speed and maneuverability.

Empire 4 (Hourglass) – Weapons are effective against all armor classes, but do not have good range. Their ships are also quite fast.

Empire 5 (Crescent) – Ships are slow to turn, but are effective at long range, and some have very good arcs.