

SEARI Working Paper Series

Title: *Space Tug Skirmish Rules v3.2*

Author: M.E. Fitzgerald and A.M. Ross

Paper Number: **WP-2014-2-1**

Revision Date: March 01, 2014

The content in this paper is in pre-published, draft form. It has not been peer-reviewed and should be used for informational purposes only. The authors warn that the paper may contain typos, misquotes, incomplete, and possibly incorrect content. It is intended that the paper will be revised and elevated to “published” status, at which point the quality caveat will be lifted.

Space Tug Skirmish

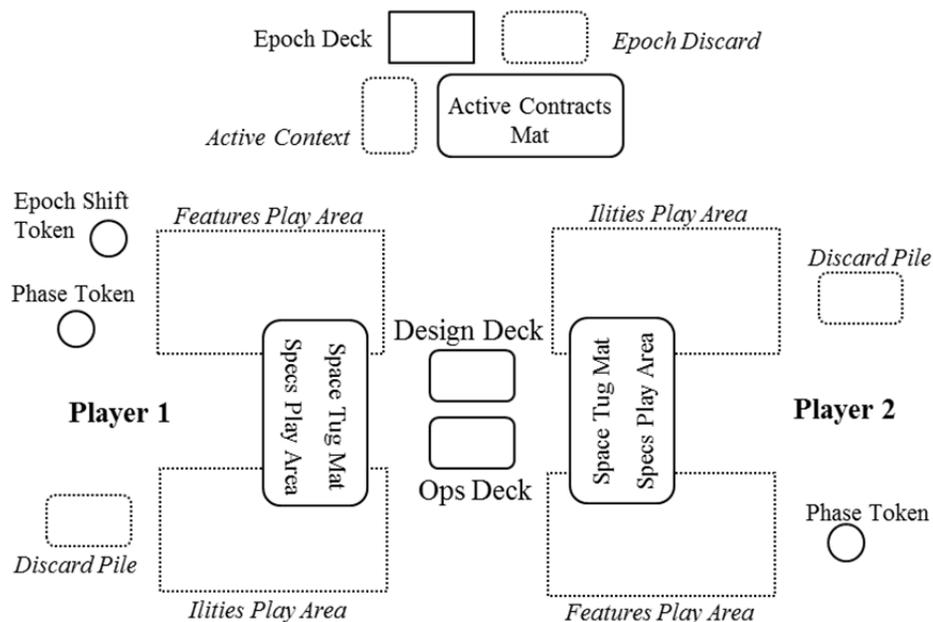
A Battle of Engineering for 1-4 players

v3.2

In Space Tug Skirmish, you are the lead designer of a brand new space tug, which you plan to use to accumulate your (undeniably deserved) vast fortune! There's only one problem: you aren't the only person with that idea. Use your wits and race your opponent to \$100M!

Setup

Shuffle the decks of Design cards and Operations (Ops) cards separately and place them face down in the middle of the table. The Epoch deck should be shuffled and the play field should be set up on the side. Give each player a Basic Space Tug mat face up in front of them and a phase token set to "Design". Each player should also have a piece of paper (*budget sheet*) and a writing tool to keep track of their funds; mark each player's initial funds as \$30M. (2-player table setup displayed below)



In this game, the Design deck is filled with cards that will modify and improve your space tug, making it easier to earn money while in the Ops phase. The Ops deck is filled with cards that will temporarily boost your own tug's performance or hurt an opponent. The Epoch deck is a wildcard largely outside player control, modifying the rules of the game on a regular basis.

To begin, each player draws seven cards from the Design and/or Ops decks. The seven cards can be divided between the two decks any way the player chooses: this is an important strategic decision! If desired, any player may 'mulligan' their initial hand by setting aside their cards and drawing one fewer (six for first mulligan, five for second, and so on). When all players are satisfied with their hands, reshuffle all cards set aside this way back into the appropriate decks.

The player who had their birthday most recently is given the Epoch Shift token and takes the first turn, with play continuing counterclockwise around the table.

A brief terminology introduction:

Turn – one player's turn

Round – one turn for each player (one trip around the table)

Phase – current status of Design/Ops for each player (shown by token)

Starting the Game

Epoch Shift – The first action of the game after setting up is the first Epoch Shift. The top card of the Epoch deck is put into play. This happens once per round, immediately before the draw of the player with the Epoch Shift token (this will be the player who took the first turn, unless another card moves the token). The types of Epoch cards and how to play them are described in the Additional Instructions section.

The basic form of a player's turn has three parts: draw, play, and discard.

Draw – When your turn begins, draw a card. This draw can be from either the Design or Ops deck, your choice. In fact, *any time you draw, you are allowed to select from which pile you draw a card.* However, you cannot draw from the Epoch deck.

Play – After drawing, you are allowed to play cards from your hand if you so desire. Only Design cards may be played while in the Design phase, and only Ops cards may be played while in the Ops phase. Playing a card involves first paying its base cost indicated in \$M on the golden square in the lower-left corner (subtracting that number from the current funds on your budget sheet) and then placing it down on the table. You are not allowed to have negative funds, thus you are not allowed to play cards with a cost that is larger than your current funds. You do NOT have to play a card if you do not want to play a card.

Note that there is a limit to the number of cards you can play in a single turn: you may play up to 2 cards per turn while in the Design phase, but only 1 card per turn while in the Ops phase. The game starts with all players in the Design phase.

Different cards have different purposes. The card types and their general uses are described in the Additional Instructions section. Learn them well!

Discard – Cards are discarded when they are no longer used. This occurs immediately for Attack and Effect cards; all other cards go to your discard pile when they are destroyed. Additionally, there is a maximum hand size of seven: if it is the end of your turn and you have more than seven cards in hand, you must discard until you have only seven cards. Each player has their own discard pile; this is important for some cards. Note that the “discard down to seven cards” process occurs only at the END of YOUR turn: you do not have to discard as soon as you go over seven cards, or at the end of other players’ turns.

The Second Turn And Beyond

Now that you know how to start the game and take a turn, you know the game! Play continues with players taking turns counterclockwise until

someone wins. Remember to perform an Epoch Shift before the draw of whoever holds the shift token! There is one remaining wrinkle though...

Switching to Operations – As you know, all players start the game in the Design phase, where you should be focusing on playing cards to strengthen your space tug. However, to win the game, you need to make money, which you cannot do without launching your system! Switching from Design phase to Ops phase is simple: when it is your turn, instead of playing any cards, simply declare “I’m launching!” and flip your phase token over to the “Ops” side. You cannot play any cards and do not receive any per-turn operations income this turn, but you can receive rewards for any active Contracts that you meet and you can win the game.

While in Ops phase, you receive per-turn income AT THE BEGINNING of your turn equal to the sum of the incremental incomes provided by your Basic Space Tug (+\$1M) and any attached Features or Specs you have played.

Switching Back to Design – Frequently you will want to return to the Design phase to play additional augmentations on your space tug. There are two ways to accomplish this:

1. Pay \$5M to decommission your tug (instead of playing a card)
2. Play a “Recover and Redesign” Effect card (for only \$1M)

After doing either of these, flip your phase token back to the Design side. You may not play any other cards during this turn.

Knowing when the time is right to switch between Design and Ops is a key to the game!

Reshuffling the Decks – If the game progresses such that either the Design, Ops, or Epoch decks are empty and a player wishes to draw from them, all players immediately shuffle their discard piles back into the appropriate draw pile. This means that, for example, if the Ops pile is empty and Player 1 wants to draw an Ops card, all players reshuffle all Ops cards from their discard piles back into the deck. If the Epoch deck is empty and a new card must be played from it, the Epoch discard pile

is reshuffled into the deck, leaving all active Contracts and Context on the field.

Winning the Game

A player wins the game when he ends his turn in the Ops phase AND he has \$100M of current funds on his budget sheet.

Additional Instructions

Here is some additional terminology:

Income / Per-turn Income – This refers to the funds received from Features/Specs (and the +\$1M from the Basic Space Tug itself) at the beginning of each player’s turn in Ops phase.

Revenue – This refers to ALL sources of revenue, including per-turn income, Effects, and Contracts that result in funds, but NOT funds created by Disturbances.

Stats – Space tugs are graded by potential customers using three stats: Strength, Speed, and Energy. Stat points are represented on the cards as red fists, green rockets, and blue lightning respectively, and are added across all cards attached to a tug, similarly to income. Most Contracts require a minimum level of each stat in order to be met. Building Specs is the main way to improve the stats of your space tug, however be aware that improving one stat may decrease another! Try to build a balance of all three stats.

Destroy – If a card would “destroy” another card or cards, each destroyed card is placed into the discard pile of the player who controlled it. During their turn, players may choose to destroy cards attached to their own space tug for free, as sometimes a card may become a hindrance (e.g., a Spec that reduces one dimension of stats).

Disable/Repair – If a card would “disable” another card or cards, each disabled card is flipped upside down, but remains on the field of play.

Disabled cards are considered inactive, meaning Features do not generate per-turn income, Specs do not generate any stats, and Ilities cannot be used. For most card effects, disabled cards are considered not present, unless an Attack is selecting a random target to destroy. “Repairing” is the means to fix disabled cards, and results in the cards being turned right side up again and immediately resuming full effect. To repair a disabled card, you must pay half of the card’s base cost (round up) if in the Design phase, or that amount *plus \$3M* if in the Ops phase. Repairing can only be performed during your turn, but does not count as playing a card. Furthermore, disabled cards CAN NOT BE LAUNCHED! Any space tug that switches into Ops phase immediately has each disabled card attached to it destroyed.

Finally, the card types and a description of each are as follows:

Feature – Features are modifications to your Basic Space Tug and when played, they stay on the field in the play area until destroyed. Features provide per-turn income AT THE BEGINNING of your turn while in Ops phase. Your space tug can have any number of Features on it, but NO multiples of the same Feature. If at any point in time you control two Features of the same name, destroy one of them. All Features are Design phase cards.

Spec – Specs are equipment for your tug, and they come in three subcategories: fuel tank, propulsion type, and manipulator arm size (*fuel*, *prop*, and *manip* on the cards). Similar to Features, Specs are Design phase cards that remain in the play area indefinitely, but *unlike* features, you may have only one of each subcategory of spec. Your Basic Space Tug mat specifies a small tank, bipropellant propulsion, and small manipulator: playing a Spec card immediately overrides the previous type of that subcategory. If you want to switch Specs, simply play another card of the same type; for example, if you have an electric propulsion system and want to switch to nuclear, you can simply play the nuclear propulsion Spec card and the existing electric system is immediately discarded. The purpose of equipping Specs to your space tug is that they allow you to complete Contracts for extra revenue by improving your tug’s stats.

Ility – Ilities are temporal value constructs of any engineering system. In this game, they are Design phase cards that stay in the play area and allow you to perform new actions outside of the basic rules; for example, playing Flexibility will allow you to play an additional card every turn. As with Features, you are not allowed to have duplicates of any one Ility on your space tug, but you may have as many different Ilities as you want. Unlike Features and Specs, Ilities will not earn you money, but they will make your system much more powerful!

Attack – Attack cards are Ops phase cards that destroy or disable cards attached to your opponents' space tugs. Attacks are discarded once played.

Effect – Effects are located both in the Design and Ops decks. Effects specify an action that can affect you, your opponents, or everyone, and take effect immediately before being discarded. Note that some Effects last multiple turns despite the fact that the cards themselves are discarded upon being played.

Contract – Contracts are Epoch cards that specify a set of requirements that a potential customer desires in a space tug, along with a reward for the completion of the contract. When a Contract is played from the Epoch deck, it goes into the Active Contracts area of the Epoch play field. Up to three Contracts can be active at one time. If three Contracts are active and a fourth is played, the oldest Contract is immediately discarded, before any player can meet the new one. Some contracts also specify a “Bonus” tier of rewards, that specifies more stringent requirements but a higher reward. A Contract is met by a space tug matching or exceeding the requirements of a Contract while currently in Ops phase: the player who does this adds funds to their budget sheet equal to the specified reward, and then the Contract is put into the Epoch discard pile. If NO players satisfy the Contract, the Contract remains active until either it becomes satisfied (and proceed as above) or it is discarded as the oldest Contract. In the event of a tie (multiple players meet the Contract simultaneously, usually as it is first played), a player who meets the Bonus takes the reward over one who doesn't. If that does not break the tie, the space tug with the highest TOTAL number of stat points wins and takes the reward. If that still does not break the tie,

all tied players split the reward evenly (round up). Players who lose a tiebreaker receive a consolation reward of \$3M.

Context – Contexts are Epoch cards that modify the rules of the game for all players. For example, “Increased Productivity” allows each player to draw an extra card at the beginning of his turn. When a Context is played from the Epoch deck, it goes into the Active Context slot of the Epoch play field, while the previous Context is discarded. The Context's effects last from when it is played to when it is discarded for a new Context. If no Context card occupies the Active Context slot at the beginning of the game, play with normal rules (the same as the “Business as Usual” context).

Disturbance – Disturbances are Epoch cards that cause one-off effects on the game as soon as they are played. For example, “Solar Flare” forces all players in Ops phase to immediately switch back to Design (at no cost). When a Disturbance is played, it is discarded after its effect takes place.

Strategy Tips

You start the game in the Design phase, so your initial seven card draw will need to have quite a few Design cards. Still, don't be afraid to take a few Ops cards as well, as they may open up an opportunity for you to jump out to an early lead!

Remember that it is a dangerous world out there, where opponents can attack and disturbances can strike without warning! It is dangerous to rely on a single card if you have no way to protect it. Also, don't neglect playing Ilities just because they won't make you money: they can easily turn the tide of the game by allowing you to play by different rules!

Competition can be cutthroat, and not always on the level. In Space Tug Skirmish, collusion is not only allowed, it is encouraged! Anything short of trading cards with another player or explicitly sharing what cards are in your hand is fair game. Consider teaming up against a player who is in the lead by suggesting potential favors you can do for a temporary ally, but watch out or you might get backstabbed!

This game is all about the tension between saving money vs. spending money, Design phase vs. Ops phase, and competing against opponents vs. epochs. Try to strike a balance!

It helps to know the cards: feel free to look through the decks before the game to get an idea of what can happen!

Persona Challenge

Space Tug Skirmish includes an additional card type for an optional game mode: the Persona. There are 10 Personas in the game, each with three cards corresponding to Levels 1, 2, and 3. As an added challenge, play the game with each player choosing a Persona at the start! The rules are as follows:

1. Each player chooses a single Persona at the start of the game (this can be selected or random, as desired by the players)
2. Take your three Persona cards, and place them next to your space tug, with Level 1 face-up and Levels 2 and 3 face-down. Don't stack these cards!
3. Face-up Persona cards specify a rules change or ability that affects only you, much like Ilities except usually more powerful!
4. Face-down Persona cards are "locked". They show the criteria necessary to level up and unlock the card. If at any time you meet this goal, turn that card face up. Level 2 must be unlocked before Level 3.
5. You do not ever lock or turn off a face-up Persona card: they remain active all game. This includes when you level up (the lower level cards stay active) or if you subsequently lose or fall below the criteria you met to level up (you don't "level down").

Typically, the Level 1 card specifies a negative effect: some people can't do certain things! But if you can manage to level up according to your Persona's preferred playstyle, you will be rewarded with powerful abilities that should amplify that strategy.

The Personas are designed to make you think about individual preferences or modes of thought: each Persona wants to go about

winning this space race differently! For example, the Military Tactician wants to attack his opponents into the ground, while the Bounty Hunter wants to meet as many contracts as he can. Play with different Personas to mix it up: try to win with each of them and master the Persona Challenge!

Alternate Rules

Rags to Riches – Start the game in Ops phase with \$0 in initial funds and no cards in your initial hand. This will be hard!

Sprint to the Finish – You can play any number of cards per turn if any player has over \$80M. Climactic conclusions!

Slow and Steady – No one can receive more than \$10M of per-turn income: better focus on a long-lasting strategy!

Single Player – See how few turns you need to make \$200M without competition. Watch out though, you still need to contend with the Epoch deck!

Epoch Master – One player forgoes making a space tug and becomes the Epoch Master! Any time there would be an Epoch Shift without the influence of an Effect card, the Epoch Master draws the top two cards from the Epoch deck and must play one of them, discarding the other. The Epoch Master's goal is to stop all of the space tug designers from making money, but this time the designers are working together! Each player maintains his own funds as usual, but the space tug team wins if at any point their COMBINED funds equal \$60M times the number of designers (double the starting funds). The Epoch Master wins if he can stop this from happening before 25 rounds have passed. Don't forget to use Epoch-shifting Effects in order to take some power out of the Epoch Master's hands!

Contents

Included: This game should come with 1 box, 1 rule set, 280 cards (50 epoch, 100 design, 100 operations, 30 persona), 4 player mats, 1 epoch mat, 5 tokens, and 10 token labels (4 design, 4 operations, 2 epoch shift).

Not included: In order to play, players need paper and writing utensils to keep track of their funds.

Before first play, please place 1 design token label and 1 operations token label on either side of 4 of the tokens. The last token should get an epoch shift label on either side.

Credits

The following people made this game possible.

Game Concept: Matt Fitzgerald
Card Design: Matt Fitzgerald and Adam Ross
Artwork: Adam Ross, Matt Fitzgerald, Elaine Han, and Morgan Lai
Play Testers: Matt Fitzgerald, J. Clark Beesemyer, Dan Fulcoly, Nicola Ricci, Brian Mekdeci, Hugh McManus, Mike Schaffner, Marcus Wu, Paul Grogan, Tom Boning, David Ashpole, Jeremy Kalas, Manting Lao, and other MIT SEArrians

Legal

Space Tug Skirmish is ©2013 Matt Fitzgerald and MIT SEArri group. All rights reserved.