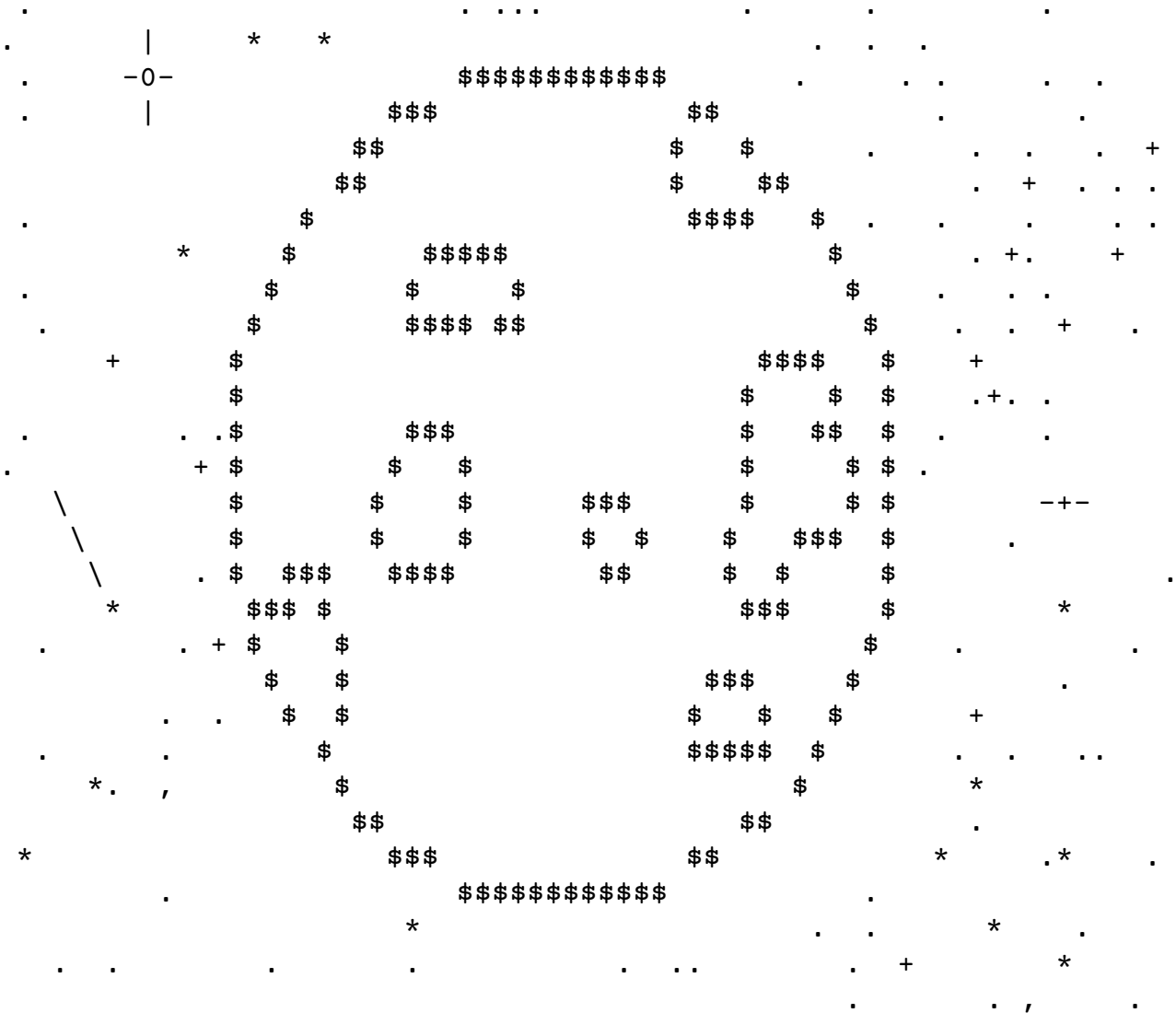


# ACITTS PILAIMETS



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*ASCII Planets* is a board game in which 1–7 players lead an entire planet through the modern age into a warp-capable civilization by advancing **Technology** and **Culture**, training **Population**, constructing Starships, and interacting through **Trade** or inter-planetary conquest.

Each planet's progress in various fields, production, and use of resources are marked on a piece of paper, the **Planet sheet**. Each turn begins with rolling of five dice. During a brief round of Diplomacy, some dice may be rerolled; the players then proceed to use the results to mark their sheets. When any of several possible game end conditions is triggered, points are calculated and the player with the most points wins.

The game is a *standalone* roll-and-write game, based on mechanics from the original game, *ASCII Empires*. Both games are named for their use of text-based visuals inspired by the 1967 ASCII character encoding standard.

## 1 Components

Besides these rules, you will need:

- One **Planet Sheet** per player
- Pen(s) or pencil(s)
- 5 six-sided dice: 3 **White Dice** 1 **Blue Die**, and 1 **Black Die**

The set referenced by the rulebook is listed above, but any colours will do as long as the players can tell them apart.

The rules and **Planet Sheet** of *ASCII Planets* can be downloaded online: the game is "print-and-play".

The game is also open source and written in LaTeX, so you can contribute to the game's continued development at: <https://jacobsalmela.com/ascii-planets/>. You can even create your own planets (see **Customizing**, p.10)!

## 2 Setup

Print a **Planet Sheet** for each player. A4 size is recommended. If you plan to play several games, printing on both sides of the paper

helps conserve trees. The sheets may be printed either in greyscale or in colour.

Players should sit around a table facing each other. The tablespace in the middle is considered Outer Space. In multiplayer games, the seating order dictates which Planets players can travel to once your first **Starship** is built and activated (see **Reach**, p.5).

You may name your Planet and design a simple Insignia to represent yourself (e.g. your initials or a small picture). The Insignias are used for flavour but also to distinguish different players' Starships (see **Military**, p.5). You are then ready to start playing!

# 3 Playing the game

## 3.1 Turn Structure

*ASCII Planets* is played in turns. With the exception of the solo mode (see [Player Count](#), p.9), the number of turns is not set beforehand. Instead, the players take turns until one of several game end conditions (see [End of the Game](#), p.8) is met.

Each turn consists of five phases:

1. **Dice:** The five dice are rolled. Any player may do this (as the results will be the same for all players)
2. **Diplomacy:** The players discuss the results and may collectively spend **Currency** to reroll some of the dice (see [Diplomacy](#), p.7)
3. **Disasters:** All dice still showing the value 1 are rerolled. This may result in Disasters being triggered (see [Disasters](#), p.7)
4. **Development:** This is where most of the game action takes place. The die faces are now considered final and the players take actions simultaneously using the die results available to them.
5. **Deployment:** Players may deploy Squadrons to perform one or more **Military** actions (see [Military](#), p.5)

The players then begin another turn if no game end conditions have been met. Otherwise, the scores will be calculated after the final Deployment phase and the player with the most points wins.

## 3.2 Using Dice

In the Development phase, players use the dice to improve their Planets. Each die can be assigned to one of the following actions:

- Activating one Fortification type
- For **Trade** (see [Trade and Convoys](#), p.6)

- For **Culture** (see [Culture](#), p.6)
- Constructing Fortifications (see [Fortifications](#), p.2)

The following rules always apply:

- The actions may be taken in any order
- Each action may be taken several times
- Each individual die may only be used once per player per turn

Players' decisions are independent of one another. (Players may use the same dice for different purposes.)

You may only use dice that are available to you based on your progress on the **Technology** track (see [Technology](#), p.4). At the beginning of the game, only **White Dice** are available but the **Blue Die** and **Black Die** are *still rolled for the purpose of checking for Disasters*. You can gain access to the other two dice once you develop enough **Technology**.

## 3.3 Fortifications

Construction is one of the main ways for the Planet's inhabitants to expand into Outer Space. Fortifications (buildings or ships) are constructed by connecting four dots on the map with lines to make a square. (A connection between two adjacent dots counts as one line.)

The number of Fortifications you may draw on a turn is equal to the combined value of dice used for construction. For example, the **Academy** and **Factory** each cost 8; if you rolled a total of 16, you could create two of either Fortifications or one of each. You may use one or more **Great Person** bonuses from the **Population** track (see [Population](#), p.3) to increase the amount you have to spend by 4). Example: The 3 **White Dice** display

values **2**, **3** and **4** and you have **1 Great Person** available. If all three dice are used for construction, the total number possible is  $2+3+4 = 9$ . This is enough to construct an **Academy** or **Factory** Fortification, each of which cost **8** to complete. The remainder ( $9-8 = 1$ ) is lost, because no Fortifications cost **1**. Alternatively, you could use only the **4** result and the **Great Person** bonus of **+4**, sparing the **2** and **3** results for Activating Fortifications, **Trade**, or **Culture**.

There are six different Fortification types (see [Fortifications](#), p.2) divided into three Levels.

- To construct a Level II Fortification, you need to have at least one staffed Fortification of each Level I type. Correspondingly, Level II Fortifications are a prerequisite for Level III Fortifications.
- Constructing all Level III Fortifications triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus. Some rules always apply when constructing:
  - Any number of Fortifications can be constructed on a turn
  - A Fortification has to be completed (its cost fully paid for) on a single turn. (You may not start constructing a Fortification and finish it on a later turn.)
  - Fortifications can touch but not overlap, including Fortifications destroyed by game effects
  - If any part of a building's outline would intersect Mountainous terrain or a Nebula, the construction costs one (\$) **Currency**. (If you have no **Currency**, you may not build there.)
  - A Fortification may be staffed (with a letter inside) or empty. The **Space Station** needs no staff.
  - Once complete, a Fortification may be staffed by crossing one of your available Astronauts (/ becoming **X**) and marking the letter (e.g. **A** for

**Academy**) inside the Fortification. The **Astronaut** is now a **Specialist** working in that Fortification.

- You must staff Fortifications on the same turn they were constructed, if able. (You cannot carry empty Fortifications and idle Astronauts from one turn to the next). Staffed Fortifications can be Activated using a die. When Activated, each Fortification produces a distinct advantage (see [Fortifications](#), p.2).

- A single die may activate all of your Fortifications of the same type.
- A single die may only activate one type of Fortification.
- A Fortification may be activated any number of times each turn.
- A Fortification may be activated on the same turn it was built, provided it is staffed and a suitable die is still available.

To activate a Fortification, the die must have a high enough value. An **Academy** can be activated with any die equal to or greater than **2**, while Starships can only be activated with a **5** or **6**. The die values necessary to activate a Fortification are shown in the table on the **Planet Sheet**.

A **6** may activate a **Space Station** or any other Fortification type. A **3** can activate **Factory** or **Academy**, while a **2** may only activate **Academy**.

Example: You have two Labs and an **Academy** and access to dice showing the results **2**, **4** and **5**. You may use both **4** and **5** to activate the two Labs (for a total output of **4 Technology**) and the **2** to activate the **Academy** (to produce one **Astronaut** for the **Population** track).

### 3.4 Population

To leave your planet and venture into Outer Space, your Planet needs Astronauts. Astronauts are produced by an **Academy** and

recorded on a player's **Population** track with slashes (/). You start with three Astronauts.

Astronauts are useful in several ways. They can:

- Become a **Specialist** who staff Fortifications and enable them to be Activated (see **Fortifications**, p.2)
- Be trained as Pilots when activating Starships or Battleships (see **Military**, p.5)

Whenever one group of boxes of the **Population** track is completely filled in (/), a **Great Person** emerges. You may at any time check the smaller box next to the group to:

- Add 4 to the available dice available to spend for the purpose of Construction.
- Check 2 boxes of the **Technology** track.
- Check any 2 boxes of the **Culture** grid.

Filling the entire **Population** track triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

### 3.5 Currency

**Currency** is produced through Factories but can also be gained by advancing **Trade**, **Technology**, and **Culture**. Available **Currency** is recorded on the **Currency** track by filling the squares with the capital letter (**S**). When spent, the capital **S**' have a line drawn through them, becoming the dollar sign (**\$**). There are many uses for **Currency**:

- Spending one **Currency** (**\$**) lets you modify a die value by 1 in either direction in the Development phase for the purpose of Construction, Activation, **Trade**, or **Culture**. The same die can be modified several times by spending more **Currency**. The die is not turned – it retains its original value for the other players. A modified die value may exceed 6 (rising to 7+ – it does not "go over" to 1) but cannot go lower than 2.
- One **Currency** (**\$**) lets you also hire a new **Astronaut**. (Add / to **Population** track.)

- With three **Currency** (**\$\$\$**), you may check one box of a **Technology**, **Culture**, or **Military** track (reflecting patronage of scientists and artists, or hiring Pilots, respectively).
- Five **Currency** (**\$\$\$\$\$**) lets you provide advanced **Technology** and clean energy to the people, increasing **Happiness** (see **Happiness**, p.8) by one.
- **Currency** can be spent for rerolls in the Diplomacy phase (see **Diplomacy**, p.7).

Filling the entire **Currency** track triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

### 3.6 Technology

Technological progress gives your Planet access to additional dice and other bonuses, increasing your options and allowing more powerful turns. **Technology** is produced by Labs. Each time one of your Labs is activated, you may check the leftmost box of your **Technology** track. The track branches at certain points: once past these, you may check boxes in any branch you have started. The upper branch of the Antimatter track reflects experimentation and advances in Antimatter for use in space travel. The middle branch represents advances in Engineering.

Various points on the track provide one-time or lasting benefits upon researching them (checking the indicated box).

- **Cure** makes you immune to the **Pandemic** disaster.
- Antimatter (checking the first box of the upper shaded area) gives you access to the **Blue Die** for the rest of the game.
- Engineering research gives you access to the **Black Die** for the rest of the game.
- **Warp Drive** gives you **Reach** (see next section) to all other players for the purposes of **Military** actions or **Trade**.
- **Shields** make your Squadrons (see **Military**, p.5) more powerful for the purposes of defence.

- **Lasers** make your Squadrons (see **Military**, p.5) more powerful for the purposes of attacking.
- Whenever you check a box with a **C** symbol as it's reward, you may cross any one box on the **Culture** grid.
- Whenever you check a box with a **S** symbol as it's reward, you may gain one **Currency**.
- Finishing any branch triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

### 3.7 Reach

In multiplayer games, it is relevant to consider which players have **Reach** to one another for the purposes of **Military** actions or **Trade**. This is determined by two things:

- Seating order: players sitting next to one another always have **Reach** to each other after you build at least one **Starship** (exception: 2-player games, see **Player Count**, p.9).
- Progress on the **Technology** track: once a player has researched **Warp Drive** (and they have at least one ship), their **Reach** will expand and allow travel to any other player's Planet.

**Reach** is most easily thought of as the ability to leave your Planet and venture into the Outer Space in order to reach other players' Planets. At the beginning of the game, your Convoys and Squadrons cannot travel in Outer Space until you build at least one **Starship**. Once this is accomplished, they can travel to the Planet on your immediate right or left; however, they cannot cross the vastness of Outer Space that divides the other boards, nor can they travel to **Reach** the players on the opposite side of the table (more than one planet away) until **Warp Drive** is unlocked.

Thus, once you have at least one **Starship** you have **Reach** to your neighbour's Planet to your immediate left and right. Once your Planet has researched **Warp Drive** (see

**Technology**, p.4), you can travel to any Planet of your choosing, and therefore have **Reach** to all players' Planets.

### 3.8 Military

The art of war is of vital importance to your Planet. Mustering and deploying Squadrons of Starships allows you to attack opponents or even establish an **Battleship** in their territory. There are also ruthless Pirates, a non-player enemy faction which you may wage war against.

**Military** units are produced by creating Starships. Each time one of your Starships is Activated, you may cross off an **Astronaut** from your **Population** track (/ becoming **x**) and check the leftmost box of your **Military** track. The boxes of the **Military** track are arranged in cohorts of two. When a cohort is completely filled in, it becomes a **Squadron**. Checking the final box triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

Squadrons can be deployed to various ends in the Deployment phase. As you deploy a **Squadron**, you check the smaller box next to it (to show it has been used) and gain 1 point of Power (2 points instead if you are the defending or attacking side and have researched **Shields** or **Lasers**, respectively). You may deploy several Squadrons at once. As an attack is being resolved, players may deploy additional Squadrons. Only after no one wishes to deploy any more Squadrons are the effects resolved. Power is to be used instantly for **Military** actions: it does not carry over to the next turn.

You may use 1 point of Power to defend against attacks:

- Cancel a Pirate raid on your Planet (see **Disasters**, p.7).
- Reduce the Power of an opponent's attack on you by **1**.
- Reduce the Power of an opponent's attack on another player by **1**, provided

you have **Reach** to the defender.

- Prevent the destruction of your **Starship** by the **Terrorism** Disaster (see **Disasters**, p.7).

You may use 1 point of Power to attack:

- Destroy a Pirate ship, provided there are unraided Pirates on a sheet you have **Reach** to (see **Reach**, p.5). This yields you three **Currency (SSS)**. When all Pirates on your sheet are destroyed (regardless of who destroyed them), you immediately gain **2 Happiness**.
- Attack another player's Planet to whom you have **Reach**. They lose **1 Currency** (if able) and gain **1 Unhappiness**. If they lost **Currency** you gain **1 Currency**.

You may use 2 points of Power to:

- Establish a **Battleship** on another player's territory where you have **Reach** to.
- Raze an opponent's **Battleship** on your territory. The **Battleship** is crossed over and cannot be activated. Battleships are permanent figures on other players' territory. They can only be established by a successful attack with Power **2** or more—not through regular construction.
- A **Battleship** is established by drawing a 1x1 area on any free area on the opponent's map. Mark it with your Insignia/initials/distinguishing mark.
- The **Battleship** may not touch or overlap other Fortifications. If its outline intersects Nebulus terrain, pay **1 Currency**.
- The opponent may not build in the area taken by another player's **Battleship**.

Example: Kashykk has three Squadrons and Alderaan has one. The Kashykk player deploys two Squadrons for **2** Power to establish a **Battleship** in Alderaan. The Alderaan player deploys their only **Squadron**, reducing Kashykk's Power to **1**. The Kashykk player now has a choice: they may use the single point for a regular attack or establish the **Battleship** by deploying their remaining

**Squadron** for a total of **2** unopposed Power.

Battleships can be Activated with a die showing **6**. When Activating an **Battleship**, you can Activate any one Fortification type, counting both your own Fortifications and the colonized players' Fortifications (as if they belonged to you). Those players then gain one **Unhappiness**.

### 3.9 Trade and Convoys

**Trade** can make several Planets better off. Acquiring exotic goods makes citizens happier but also allows other players to earn **Currency**. **Trade** is not produced by a Fortification. Instead, die results may be allocated directly into one of the five Convoys of varying length.

Convoys are completed as follows:

- To check a box, you have to use a die with the specified number or higher.
- The boxes of any given **Convoy** have to be checked in order from left to right.
- The rows can be completed in any order.
- You may have several unfinished Convoys travelling at once.
- You may check multiple boxes per turn if suitable dice are available.

When the Convoys' journey is finished (the last box of a row is checked), you must announce this to the other players. You will then receive the reward indicated on its right: **Happiness**, **Currency**, and **Technology** or **Culture**. Moreover, each other player with **Reach** (see **Reach**, p.5) to your Planet earns the reward listed on the sheet. Checking all boxes of all Convoys triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

### 3.10 Culture

Patronage of the arts and community adds to the prestige of your planet. Cultural progress allows you to gain **Currency**, **Population**,

**Technology**, or **Happiness** as creative people from all around the galaxy flock to your Planet.

The boxes of the **Culture** grid may be checked by using a die with exactly the indicated result. As a row or column of the grid is completed, you gain the associated reward. Rows provide points for end game scoring; columns provide one-time rewards. The boxes may be checked in any order. Checking every box of the **Culture** grid triggers the end of the game and provides a scoring bonus.

### 3.11 Diplomacy

The Diplomacy phase comes right after the dice are first rolled at the beginning of a turn. The players have a chance to reroll any or all dice. They might, for example, choose to reroll all dice displaying a value of 1 (and thus, about to trigger Disasters in the following step). A reroll is only possible if the players collectively spend **Currency** equal to the number of players (e.g. \$\$\$\$ in a 4-player game).

- The requirement can be met by each player paying one **Currency**, but this need not necessarily be the case. The players must negotiate. Even one player alone may perform a reroll by paying the cost. The other players need not agree; they only need not pay.
- The cost is paid only once per reroll, no matter the number of dice rerolled.
- Any number of dice can be rerolled any number of times.
- If there are several different proposals for rerolls, follow the Order of Play rules to determine who goes first (see [Order of Play](#), p.9).

### 3.12 Disasters

The Planet is under constant threat from calamities and Pirate raids. Disasters are

checked for each turn after the Diplomacy phase.

1. If any dice showing the value **1** remain at this stage, they are rerolled separately from the rest.
2. Each player looks at the results and checks the leftmost unchecked box from the Disaster grid rows corresponding to those numbers.
3. If any further **1s** resulted from the reroll, the process is then repeated until no **1s** remain.
4. The rerolled dice are then placed with the rest and may be used normally during the ensuing Development phase.

Whenever the third (shaded) box of any row of the Disaster grid is checked, the corresponding Disaster hits. One row may only trigger once, so if those numbers are later rolled again, nothing happens.

Many Disasters only trigger under certain conditions and/or offer the players a choice.

- **Pandemic** only affects players who have not yet researched **Cure** (see [Disasters](#), p.7). The affected player must cross over two **Population** or gain one **Unhappiness**.
- The damages of **War** can be negated by Deploying one **Squadron**. The players who cannot or choose not to do this lose up to three **Currency** and gain one **Unhappiness**.
- **Terrorism** affects players whose **Unhappiness** (in terms of crossed boxes) is larger than their **Happiness**. It can be prevented by Deploying one **Squadron** and gaining one **Unhappiness**. Otherwise, a Fortification (the player chooses which) is destroyed and cannot be used for the rest of the game. No new Fortifications may be built in the same space. You may choose an opponent's **Battleship** as the target, but they may prevent its destruction by deploying one **Squadron**.



Hardship breeds creativity: the triggering of some Disasters allows player to check any one box from the **Culture** grid.

### 3.13 Happiness

A happy **Population** provides points at the end of the game, but creeping **Unhappiness** may counter some of the gains and provoke **Terrorism**(see above).

**Happiness** is gained through **Trade** (see [Trade and Convoys, p.6](#)), **Culture** (see [Trade and Convoys, p.6](#)) and **Military** victory over Pirates (see [Military, p.5](#)). **Unhappiness** results from Disasters opponents' attacks on and Colonization of your Planet (see [Military, p.5](#)), **Conscription** and **Taxation** (see [Conscription and Taxation, p.9](#)).

Whenever you gain **Happiness** or **Unhappiness**, check the leftmost unchecked box of the corresponding track. The leftmost still unchecked box shows your current score. Neither **Happiness** nor **Unhappiness** may exceed the track. In the end game scoring, **Unhappiness** is deducted from **Happiness**. This may result in a negative score.

### 3.14 End of the Game

The end of the game is triggered as soon as any player has completely filled any of their tracks (**Population**, **Currency**, any branch of the **Technology** track, **Military**, **Trade**, **Culture**) or constructed each Level III Fortificationtype – i.e. whenever a ! symbol is checked.

A player who foresees that they will end the game this way must announce it at the very beginning of that Development phase, and must then carry out this plan. The only exception is when you trigger the end of the game by influencing an opponent's sheet (e.g. if you complete a **Convoy** that causes the final box in their **Culture** grid to be checked).

After the final Development phase and the ensuing Deployment phase, the points are calculated and the player with the most points wins. If several players are tied for most, follow the tiebreakers (see [Scoring, p.10](#)).

## 4 Additional Rules

### 4.1 Conscription and Taxation

If you find your accounts empty or enemy forces in orbit, you may gain one **Unhappiness** to immediately gain two **Currency (Taxation)** or train two Astronauts as Pilots to form a **Squadron (Conscription)**. No **Factory** or Starships are required for these actions. **Taxation** and **Conscription** can be performed *anytime* (including as reaction to an unfortunate dice roll or another player's declared attack against you) and can be repeated if you really need to.

### 4.2 Learning game

For the first few turns in a game with new players, it is recommended that the players take their Development steps sequentially in clockwise order so that everybody can see how each uses the dice. The players still use the same set of die faces.

### 4.3 Open Information

Players may inspect each other's sheets at any time. In the Development phase, even though players take most of their actions independently of one another, there are some instances where a player has to announce to others what they are doing:

- Whenever they complete a **Convoy** (as this may provide benefits to others)
- Whenever they plan to trigger the end of the game. This must be announced at the very start of the Development phase; otherwise, such action may not be taken.

### 4.4 Order of Play

For the most part, the order in which players execute their actions does not matter. Whenever it could (mostly in the Diplomacy or Deployment phases, although players may invoke this rule at any time), the players declare their actions in the order of

- the most undeployed Squadrons or if tied,
- the most unspent **Currency**, followed by
- the most advanced single **Technology** track,

followed by:

- the highest **Population**.

The same logic is followed for tiebreakers in end game scoring

### 4.5 Player Count

Theoretically, any number of players can join a game of *ASCII Planets*. For practical purposes, 1–7 players is recommended. Some adjustments are made for 1–2 player games.

In a solo game,

- You can still use Convoys and interact with Pirates.
- Once all Pirates camps are destroyed, you may build exactly one **Battleship** to the Pirate's space following the normal rules (it does not take space on your map; just mark it on the sheet). Upon activating it, you may Activate any Fortification type as if you had two more of that Fortification.
- The game ends after 20 turns. Other triggers do not cause the game to end (but you still get the **Mastery** bonuses).

In a two-player game,

- The players do not have **Reach** to one another at the beginning of the game (they are located on opposite sides of the galaxy). They may only gain **Reach** through researching **Warp Drive**.

## 4.6 Scoring

The scoresheet is part of the **Planet Sheet**. The following items are scored:

- Fortifications: the indicated number of points for each of Fortification of that type. Destroyed Fortifications do not count.
- **Currency**: two points for each unspent **Currency**
- Squadrons: three points for each (**Squadron** deployed or undeployed)
- **Mastery**: 21 points for each ! symbol checked (it is possible to reach several during the final turn)
- **Culture**: total points from all completed rows of the **Culture** grid
- **Happiness** minus **Unhappiness**: leftmost unchecked number on :) track minus leftmost unchecked number on :( track.

## 4.7 Symbols

|           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| <b>S</b>  | Gain <b>Currency</b>         |
| <b>\$</b> | Spend <b>Currency</b>        |
| <b>T</b>  | Gain <b>Technology</b>       |
| <b>A</b>  | Activate an <b>Academy</b>   |
| <b>F</b>  | Activate a <b>Factory</b>    |
| <b>L</b>  | Activate a <b>Lab</b>        |
| <b>*</b>  | Activate a <b>Starship</b>   |
| <b>B</b>  | Activate a <b>Battleship</b> |
| <b>:)</b> | Gain <b>Happiness</b>        |
| <b>:(</b> | Gain <b>Unhappiness</b>      |
| <b>!</b>  | Trigger end game             |

# 5 Customizing

Since *ASCII Planets* is open source and written in LaTeX, you can download the source code and modify the game to your liking.

One fun thing to do is to create your own planet. You just need to modify a few values in the source code and then generate a new set of files. Full instructions can be found on the Wiki page: <https://github.com/jacobsalmela/ascii-planets/wiki>



